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Life after *Birth*:
The Klan and Cinema, 1915-1928

Thomas Rice

September 2006

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Life after *Birth*: The Klan and Cinema, 1915-1928.

“Life after *Birth*” considers the relationship between the Ku Klux Klan and cinema during the 1920s, highlighting how the Klan used, produced and protested against film in order to recruit members, generate publicity, and define itself as a traditional Protestant American organisation. In my opening chapter I reassess the significance of *The Birth of a Nation* in the development of the Klan, and introduce a number of other overlooked films, such as *The Face at Your Window* that Kleagles (Klan recruiters) used after 1920.

In the second chapter, I consider the discourses between the Klan and the film industry, assessing the Klan’s protests against individual films, such as Chaplin’s *The Pilgrim* (1923). I show how the opportunistic Klan redefined popular conservative discourses around film, Hollywood and cinema exhibition in order to generate publicity, and to define itself against what it perceived as an immoral ‘foreign’ industry.

After considering how the Klan and the film industry addressed each other on a discursive level, I then question how this relationship was extended onto film. In chapter three I consider how the industry presented the Klan, and question what these films reveal about the industry’s attitude towards race, ethnicity, and its own role in modern society.

Chapter four uncovers a series of independent films produced by the Klan. I explore the ways in which the Klan represented itself through film, and through the publicity and exhibition contexts in which these films were shown. Using extensive primary research, I chart an unknown history of Klan film production and exhibition, and highlight the problems faced by independent Klan film enterprises. In the final chapter, I consider the decline of the Klan after 1925, through a close examination of the Klan’s continued engagement with cinema.

My thesis offers insights into the film industry, non-theatrical exhibition, censorship, and also racial attitudes within America. This interdisciplinary work, using archives previously unaccessed by cinema scholars, extends our knowledge of this crucial and overlooked moment in social and political culture and in American cinema history.

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Introduction

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.) wrote to Will Hays, the President of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (M.P.P.D.A.), in March 1940, objecting strongly to a planned remake of *The Birth of a Nation*. In his letter to Hays, Walter White, the national secretary of the N.A.A.C.P., highlighted what he perceived to be the enormous influence of the original film:

As you, of course, know, the production of *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915 was one of the chief factors in the recrudescence of the Ku Klux Klan whose depredations during the '20s constituted one of the gravest threats to orderly and democratic government in America during recent years.¹

For the N.A.A.C.P., whose widespread, virulent protests against the film influenced much of the subsequent discourse surrounding Griffith's work, *The Birth of a Nation* was continually presented as the contributing factor behind the re-emergence of the Klan in the 1920s. For example, when the N.A.A.C.P. telegraphed Kansas Governor Jonathan M. Davis in 1923, urging him to prevent the film from being exhibited in his state, it justified its protests by arguing that the film 'is largely responsible for [the] present day revival of the Klan.'²

Yet, despite the links between *The Birth of a Nation* and the re-emerging Klan of the 1920s, historians have rarely considered the importance of film in the success of this significant social, political and cultural organisation. As I will show, *Birth* was indeed a valuable propagandist device for the Klan in the 1920s, but the links between the Klan and cinema were myriad and extended well beyond this one film. The Klan produced its own films during the 1920s, controlled exhibition spaces and exploited other mainstream industry pictures, yet studies of the Klan invariably refer only to *The Birth of a Nation*. Certainly, the film is a fundamental text for both Klan historians and cinema historians, but

it is imperative to look beyond *Birth* in order to understand the complex connections between the Klan and cinema during the 1910s and 1920s.

In this study I wish to consider how the Klan used, produced and protested against film in order to recruit members, generate publicity, and define itself as a traditional Protestant American organisation. In considering the importance of cinema for the success of the Klan, this interdisciplinary work will offer a study of both cinema and the Klan in the 1910s and 1920s. Within the field of cinema studies, this project will re-evaluate established cinema history and offer original insights into subjects as diverse as the film industry, non-theatrical exhibition, censorship, and the western genre. Through Klan newspapers, films and other materials, previously unaccessed by cinema scholars, I will reposition the Klan as an important part of the conservative discourses that both directed the anti-Semitic attitudes of film reformers and pressurised the film industry into industrial regulation during the 1920s. I will also examine the industry's responses to the Klan and, in chapter four, examine the Klan's own production and exhibition of films, uncovering a previously unexplored history of films, theatres and production companies.

The Klan

This project also serves as a history of the second Ku Klux Klan, considering, for the first time, how the growth, success and disbandment of the Klan can be better understood through its exchanges with cinema. This fresh approach to Klan history will allow me to challenge many popular assumptions about the group. For example, the image of the Klan that emerges from my research is not simply of an extreme, Southern, racist group, but rather of an often-respected national organisation, defined predominantly by religion. The Klan was certainly not an anomaly of the 1920s, but was rather a defining feature of the period. In many areas, such as Indiana and Ohio, Klansmen were highly respected members of the community. Klan baseball teams smiled proudly for their team photos, while Klansmen would take off their masks in celebratory parades. Klan

newspapers often emphasised the 'everyman' appeal of the Klan as a fraternal group, embedded in the local community. As an example, the Klan newspaper, *Imperial Night-Hawk* reported that, after a parade in Pennsylvania in 1924, the Klan 'marched to a nearby school where a pie social was being held. Entering the building in their robes, the Klansmen joined in the bidding and purchased a large number of pies.'³ I certainly do not wish to dismiss or ignore the violent and often abhorrent actions of Klan groups, but it is apparent, both from my own research and from the established Klan histories of, in particular, Nancy MacLean, Kathleen Blee and Leonard Moore, that the Klan was much more important and central to American culture than contemporary audiences may care to realise. Certainly the public memory of the Klan, shaped in part by the Civil Rights movement, by more recent Klan activities, and by cinema representation, has now erroneously re-imagined the second Klan as a renegade and marginal group.

The Klan, as an all-encompassing term, now represents over one hundred and forty years of history and, at least, three distinct historical movements. My study is focussed on the second Klan movement, which emerged in 1915 and came to prominence in the first half of the 1920s. This 'modern' Klan was largely distinct from the original group, founded in the aftermath of the Civil War.⁴ However, the modern Klan of the 1920s re-imagined the short-lived Reconstruction group and, most notably through its exploitation of *The Birth of a Nation*, associated itself with a romanticised vision of the original group. Film helped to manufacture an association between the first two Klan movements, and subsequently film has continued, through the historically non-specific Klan imagery, to unite separate periods in Klan history. There are though two important points to note here. Firstly, the dominant representations of the Klan on film were formed during the period of this study. The representation of the Klan on screen shifted enormously from *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915 to the aggressive Klan exposés of the late 1930s. The 1920s, I will argue, offered the last moment in film history in which the image of the Klan was contested on screen. Secondly, although our impressions of the Klan are shaped by modern images and by the activities of the Klan since the 1950s, the second Klan was largely removed from the earlier and later

incarnations of the group and should, to an extent, be considered as a historically specific movement.⁵ In this study then, I will utilise contemporary discussions of the Klan, within newspapers, films and promotional materials, to examine the modern Klan of the 1920s within its social and historical context.

In order to study the modern Klan of the 1920s within its historical context, it is essential to recognise that the Klan was comprised of a series of local chapters. The number of accounts of localised Klan groups offered in the last thirty years, for example by William Jenkins, Robert Goldberg, David Horowitz and, in particular, Shawn Lay, has highlighted the multi-faceted nature of the modern Klan.⁶ Even David Chalmers' influential study of the Klan, which covers over a hundred years of national Klan history, perceives the Klan not as a single entity, but rather as a group of disparate chapters.⁷ Jason Lantzer has recognised that each group operating under the Klan banner would 'fit its message to the individual community it was trying to enter,' and, as I will show throughout my work, the Klan was extremely adept in the 1920s at creating a need for, and adapting to the needs of, each community.⁸

This would seemingly make it harder to define the Klan, as the Klan responded to a variety of social concerns. In Oregon, the Klan may have been more concerned with helping administer prohibition laws, while in Chicago, an area exposed to a 'torrent of aliens,' the Klan's open opposition to the Catholics and Jews brought more support.⁹ The Klan newspaper, *Imperial Night-Hawk*, highlighted in 1923 that Klansmen were also aiding the 'enforcement of liquor laws' throughout Illinois while, in Arizona, Klansmen were fighting to stop gambling at the racetrack.¹⁰ Both recent scholarship and contemporary reports, have illustrated the varied social functions and motivations behind the Klan. Christopher Cocoltchos recognised that the Klan in Anaheim enjoyed success as a law-enforcing organisation, as the local police were 'not in a position to deal with the [crime] situation.'¹¹ The issue of race was seemingly of little relevance in Anaheim, with the Klan appearing rather as a moral organisation, administering prohibition and maintaining social order. A 1922 article in a local Californian paper entitled 'why men do join the Klan?'

argued that men ‘like to dress up in uniforms, in robes, in outlandish garments and go through intricate, difficult, mysterious ceremonies.’ The writer emphasised the ‘sociable side’ of the group, while Lantzer linked the huge success of the Klan in Hamilton County, Indiana with church revivals, as the local Klan engrained itself in the fabric of the community by aligning itself predominantly with the church.¹²

While acknowledging the different social roles of the Klan within each local community, I will argue that these social concerns were united by ideas of morality and modernity, which the Klan related to issues of religious identity. I certainly do not propose to offer a homogeneous vision of the Klan, but I will suggest that the activities and values of these local Klan groups were often consistent and organised throughout the country. For example, in chapter two, I will highlight that local Klan responses to films were often, if not organised nationally, then encouraged by similar actions outlined in the national Klan press or at national Klan functions. Furthermore, in chapter four, I will look at the Klan-made movies, often localised films presented and advertised as products of this broader national group. Indeed one of the ways in which the Klan tried to present itself as a unified national group was through cinema. Klan newspapers are also an important source here, as local versions of national papers, such as the Californian or Indiana versions of the *Fiery Cross* and the Ohio, Atlanta or Missouri editions of *Kourier* for example, all sought to position the activities of the local Klan groups within a broader national context. The Klan, as a generic ideal, was discussed in film, in Klan newspapers and in public speeches by leading officials, and it is essential to consider how the Klan, as a multi-faceted conglomerate, negotiated its identity through both the activities of local Klan groups and these broader national discourses.

Finally, readers may already have noticed that I am referring to the Klan of the 1920s as the ‘modern Ku Klux Klan.’ This terminology is widely adopted by historians, but it is particularly significant within this study. The Klan of the 1920s was, as I will argue, a modern organisation, embracing modern propaganda and the latest commercial developments. Throughout this study, I will examine the Klan’s attitudes towards

modernity, as the Klan engaged with, but also criticised, cinema. I will suggest, in particular, that the Klan's notion of modernity was defined by issues of race, religion and national identity. I will emphasise the social significance of the Klan, and furthermore will highlight how the Klan achieved success, promoting and defining itself on both local and national levels, through its engagement with cinema.

Organisation

Throughout my work, I will consider how the Klan confronted and utilised cinema. In the opening chapter I will assess the significance of *The Birth of a Nation* in the growth and establishment of the modern Klan. Although this single film has been widely analysed by film scholars, its influence on the modern Klan has been assumed and inferred, but rarely examined. I will offer fresh insights into the film, suggesting, for example, that *Birth* was more important in popularising and legitimising the Klan during the 1920s when the organisation was established. I will argue that *Birth* served to popularise the imagery, rather than ideology, of the Klan and helped to extend the modern Klan out of a purely southern context. I will highlight the different ways in which the Klan utilised this film, but I will also introduce a number of other overlooked films exploited by Klan groups, such as *The Face at Your Window* (1920).

In chapter two, I will examine the discourses between the Klan and the film industry, assessing, in particular, the Klan's protests against individual films, such as Charlie Chaplin's *The Pilgrim* (1923). I will show how the opportunistic Klan redefined popular conservative discourses around film representation, Hollywood and cinema exhibition in order to generate publicity, and to define itself against what it perceived as an immoral 'foreign' industry. A close examination of the Klan discourses surrounding film, Hollywood and the cinema will also reveal the manufactured anxieties and social pressures placed on the industry after the War.

After considering how the Klan and the film industry addressed each other on a discursive level, I will then consider how the film industry responded to the Klan at the height of its popularity. I will look at the representation, exploitation and exhibition of the Klan on mainstream screens from Mary Pickford's appearance as a female nightrider in *Heart O' The Hills* in 1919 through to the more violent depictions within the 1928 Paramount film, *The Mating Call*. I will consider how the film industry, under fear of censorship and social unrest (in part fuelled by the Klan discourses discussed in chapter two), presented an idealised, non-threatening vision of the Klan, which was defined by costume and action rather than ideology or racial politics. My work will consider the influence of these films, not only in reflecting, but in directing attitudes towards the modern Klan, and will question what these films reveal about the film industry's attitude towards race, ethnicity, and its own role in modern society.

The Klan criticised Hollywood and film as representations of modern decadence, but I will consider in chapter four how the Klan (and local Klan groups) embraced film during the 1920s. Steven Ross has suggested that 'movies were far more political and varied in their ideological perspectives during the silent era than at any subsequent time,' noting that 'groups outside the industry recognised the power of this new medium and turned out polemical films that addressed national debates over the domestic values and future direction of American society.'¹³ His work referred closely to films produced by workers' groups before the War, but these broader statements can also be applied directly to the Klan. Ross has explained that many reform organisations 'tried to change public policy by making movies that presented their cause to a mass public.'¹⁴ The Klan can also be placed within this context, although its films were concerned less with changing policy, than with promoting a role for the Klan within society and attracting new members and money to the group through this form of advertising. At the height of its popularity in 1924, the Klan set up production companies and controlled theatres. I want to look, for the first time, not only at how the Klan presented itself, but also at how it used film, considering the role of this modern medium in the success of this largely reactionary group. I will also,

once more, position the Klan alongside other respected religious and patriotic groups, such as The American Legion, that produced and exhibited films during this period.

I will consider the decline of the Klan after 1925 in chapter five. I will suggest that the Klan still sought to exploit film as it had before, but that it was no longer a prominent figure in film production, exhibition or, most crucially, in film discourse. By 1934, the Catholic Legion of Decency had usurped the Klan as a reforming organisation, and the Klan became an increasingly marginalised force, opposing policies that it had earlier supported, because they were now presented as Catholic initiatives. Furthermore, as the Klan faded from film discourse, the industry's responses towards the Klan also changed, as a series of staunchly anti- Klan films were produced. From this point on, the Klan would be negatively depicted on screen, as part of a national reconciliation with the history of racism. However, what these images do not show is the more complicated history of the engagement of the Klan and cinema in a USA struggling with the corrosive forces of modernity. This will be the subject of this dissertation.

¹ *The Records of the N.A.A.C.P.*, held at The Library Of Congress, File C302. This is also reported in Nickeanne Fleener-Marzec, *D.W.Griffith's The Birth of a Nation* (Arno, 1980), 363.

² 'Kansas Governor asked by NAACP to bar "Birth of a Nation" Film' Press Release, 8/6/23, *N.A.A.C.P. Archives*, File C302. This is also reported in Fleener-Marzec (1980), 115.

³ *Imperial Night Hawk* (4/6/24).

⁴ The original Klan had enjoyed a short life. David Chalmers suggests that the Klan was founded on Christmas Eve 1865, while Allen Trelease suggests May or early June 1866. It spread across the South in 1867, before the Imperial Wizard of the Klan, General Nathan Bedford Forrest, ordered the disbandment of the group in January 1869. Although unofficial Klan forces continued for a few more years, by 1872, the Klan appeared an outdated and now historical monument of the Reconstruction era. See David Chalmers, 'The Klan Rides, 1865-1871', *Hooded Americanism* (Duke University Press, 1981), 8. See Allen Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 3.

⁵ Michael Lewis and Jacqueline Serbu have recently highlighted how the collective memory of the founding of the original Klan in Pulaski, Tennessee, was negatively redefined by the actions of Klan groups during the 1980s. The activities of Klan groups from the Civil Rights era, to the period of David Duke in the 1970s, and even to the modern day, have all served to redefine earlier Klan groups, under this generic, historically non-specific term, 'the Klan.' See Michael Lewis and Jacqueline Serbu, 'Kommemorating the Ku Klux Klan', *The Sociological Quarterly*, Volume 40, Number 1, pp. 139-157.

⁶ Shawn Lay, *The Invisible Empire in the West* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1992, p.9) suggested that 'all history is ultimately local history.' Klan historians must also recognise the contrasting reports of Klan activities within contemporary books, speeches and newspapers. An article in the *Woodland Daily Democrat* in 1922 (31/5/22, p.6), highlighted the differing notions of acceptable social conduct that fuel Klan discourses. The writer suggested that what appeared to one person as intolerant prejudice was 'righteous' and 'patriotic' to another. Klan actions that are dismissed by their opponents as 'absurd and laughable... grim and terrible' are positively expressed and reinterpreted by the many Klansmen.

⁷ David Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism* (Duke University Press, 1981). Chalmers organises his book chronologically, but also by location, considering Klan activity within individual states.

⁸ Jason S. Lantzer, 'From the Cross of Christ to the Fiery Cross', from *Dark Beverage of Hell* (Doctoral Thesis, University of Indiana, 2006).

⁹ 'The Torrent of aliens' is a term used by Charles S. Johnson when writing about Illinois in *The Messenger* (12/23). His article 'Illinois: Mecca of the migrant mob' can be found in *These Colored United States* (Rutgers University Press, 1996), 106-115. See also Shawn Lay, *The Invisible Empire in the West* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1992), 9.

¹⁰ 'Enforcement of Liquor Laws Aided by Klansmen Throughout Illinois', *Imperial Night Hawk*, (22/12/23), 7.

¹¹ Christopher N. Cocoltchos, 'The Invisible Empire and the Search for the Orderly Community: The Ku Klux Klan in Anaheim, California' from *The Invisible Empire in the West*, Shawn Lay ed. (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1992), 103.

¹² 'Why Men Do Join the Klan', *Woodland Daily Democrat* (31/5/22), 6. Lantzer shows that the Klan in Indiana linked prohibition with Protestantism and patriotism, labelling those that block prohibition as 'UnAmerican'. He also recognises that the Klan tapped into the needs of the community, but I would argue that it also creates a need within the community. In this example the Klan do not target individual Catholics or African-Americans, but the Klan rather 'talks in broad terms of generalities,' creating an unseen threat.

¹³ Steven J. Ross, *Working Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (Princeton University Press, 1998), 35. Ross focuses predominantly on the period before 1918, arguing, as Robert Sklar also has, that the rise of an established industry and expensive feature length films made it harder for smaller independent companies. Sklar also believed that audiences

wanted escapist fare after the War, and suggested that censorship heavily restricted the output of independent companies that wished to address social problems.

¹⁴ Ross (1998), 82. The Klan was not working in opposition to the government, but rather presented itself as an extension of the police force, administering existing laws, such as prohibition.

Chapter One:

Klan Rebirth: Film and the emergence of the modern Klan

The Klan and the film industry appeared as ideological opposites during the 1920s, but traditional histories of both the film industry and the modern Klan have identified *The Birth of a Nation* as a common factor in the growth of these two phenomena. I therefore wish to begin my study by reassessing the influence of this single film in the growth of a reactionary, anti-Semitic Klan, and a modern film industry, that was perceived by many to be under Jewish control.

Film historians have often overstated the influence of *Birth* on the development of film, both formally and industrially, with Michael Rogin, for example, writing that ‘*Birth* established film as a legitimate art’ and brought ‘movies out of the nickelodeons and into the two dollar theatres.’¹ James Chandler suggested that ‘the whole cultural package, marketing strategies and all, had been initially put together by and for D.W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915,’ while a number of film historians have similarly regurgitated the popular description of Griffith as ‘the man who invented Hollywood.’² The film was certainly not directly responsible for the establishment of either Classical Hollywood cinema or a vertically integrated film industry, but was rather indicative of broad shifts in film, which were consolidated by the economic success of *Birth*.³ Regulatory and industrial changes preceded *Birth*, and the film is therefore better viewed as a prominent and influential example of a growing shift in film practice.⁴

Historians have also assumed the significance of this film in the establishment and growth of the Klan, emphasising that the new Klan emerged alongside *Birth* in 1915. However, I want to reposition *Birth* within the context of other racial discourses, in order to consider the role of this single film, innovative in style but reactive and traditional in subject, in the emergence and establishment of the modern Klan.

The Birth of the Modern Klan

The Ku Klux Klan was reformed in Atlanta in November 1915 by William Simmons, barely a week before the Atlanta première of *The Birth of a Nation*. The film was advertised on its release next to a notice for ‘The World’s Greatest, Secret, Social, Patriotic, Fraternal, Beneficiary Order,’ with the poster image for this newly-formed ‘Knights of the Ku Klux Klan’ virtually indistinguishable from the familiar image used to advertise *Birth*.⁵ William Simmons organised parades outside of the theatres, as horsemen donned Klan regalia to imitate their cinematic counterparts. David Chalmers acknowledged that while stories of the rebirth of the Klan differ, ‘there are those on the inside who claimed that it was suggested by Griffith’s picture.’ Simmons himself admitted that the organisation could not have launched so quickly if it wasn’t for Griffith’s film, stating that ‘The Birth of a Nation helped the Klan enormously.’⁶ Klan historian Wyn Craig Wade wrote extensively about the film as the motivating factor behind the new group, while John Inscoe followed the popular view that the film’s showing in Atlanta ‘instigated the revival of the Ku Klux Klan.’ Maxim Simcovitch recognised the ‘close relationship that existed, and still exists, between the film and the Ku Klux Klan,’ further suggesting that ‘the event that motivated Simmons [to form the Klan] was the scheduled Atlanta première of *The Birth of a Nation*.’⁷

The timing of the launch of the modern Klan and the release of Griffith’s hugely influential film would suggest a close relationship between these two emerging phenomena, but *Birth* was a catalyst rather than a cause for the modern Klan. Traditional causative arguments over-simplify the influence of this film and a more nuanced historical account needs to present the release of *Birth* as part of a broader matrix of discourses that fuelled the popular desire for a re-emergent Klan after 1915. As I will show, *The Birth of a Nation* was not the motivating factor behind the development of a new Klan, but the film served to popularise and publicise the organisation once it was established. William Simmons founded his modern Klan before the Atlanta première of *Birth*, and both David Chalmers and William Randel suggest that Simmons had long fostered a desire to set up his own fraternal order. The

première of *The Birth of a Nation* thus offered the opportunity to put this existing plan in motion.⁸

The Birth of a Nation may not be responsible for the birth of a modern Klan, but the film certainly popularised the image of the Klan by encouraging audience members emotionally to engage with the Klansmen on screen. Formal analysis of the film has considered how audiences have identified with the Klansmen, with Linda Williams for example exploring the ways in which Griffith 'multiplies the sexual threat to white women and with it the need for white counter-violence.' Williams considered the Klan scenes as a 'flushing of blackness from the screen,' highlighting the emotional responses these scenes provoke in both white and non-white audience members.⁹ Contemporary accounts further highlighted the influence of the Klan scenes on audiences. Harold Stearns wrote in *New Republic* that 'every audience spontaneously applauds when it (the Klan) flashes upon the screen,' while Harlow Hare's 1915 review in *Boston American* remarked that 'just a flash of the ghostly horseman, the big Ku-Klux call, and the spectators become almost frenzied in their applause.'¹⁰ Roy Aitken, a producer on the film, remarked that 'after the picture was showing in theatres throughout the nation, many movie critics said that most Americans were stirred by the scenes of the swift-riding Klansmen.'¹¹ A further review in the *Fitchburg Daily Sentinel*, typical of its time, reported that 'the audience was swayed and moved in a wonderful manner as was evidenced during the ride of the Klan when the applause was spontaneous and blood stirring.'¹²

Nickeanne Fleener-Marzec highlighted the dangerous consequences of these processes of identification, as these extreme audience reactions extended outside of the movie theatres. She cited a number of riots that followed screenings of *Birth* in 1915, while The National Board of Review received a clipping from *Chicago American* in 1916, reporting a murder in Indiana:

After witnessing the picture of "[T]he Birth of a Nation", Henry Brocj, who five weeks ago came here from Kentucky, walked out on the main street of the city and fired three bullets into the body of Edward Mason, a negro high school

student, fifteen years old. The boy died tonight. There was no provocation for the tragedy and Brocj is in jail under charge of murder.¹³

There was a growing awareness in 1915 of the moral influence of film as a medium. In an unrelated initiative, the Supreme Court determined in 1915 that films could be censored, adding that they were 'capable of evil, having power for it the greater because of their attractiveness.'¹⁴ A local Payne Fund Study in Illinois in 1933 suggested that the racist imagery within *Birth* directly influenced children's attitudes towards African Americans; 'Prejudice against the Negro had been quite clearly increased in these children's minds by the movie *The Birth of a Nation*. The virgin unmarked slates have been all but indelibly written upon with a pencil of peculiar force.'¹⁵

I will show throughout my work the enormous influence of film over the modern Klan, in directing attitudes towards the group, and in positively recruiting new Klan members. *The Birth of a Nation* enjoyed unprecedented success in 1915, and clearly encouraged audience identification with the heroic Klansmen. The film sparked enormous interest in the original Klan throughout Atlanta. For example, the Atlanta chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy exhibited Klan memorabilia and read Klan stories at their meeting in December 1915. An article in *The Atlanta Constitution* reported that 'following so closely on the recent production of *The Birth of a Nation* it will be a matter of pleasing interest to all who witnessed this photo play to learn that the program will touch on the history of the real Ku Klux Klan, the accurate portrayal of which was the crowning feature of this famous film.'¹⁶ The film glamorised and popularised the original Klan, renewing interest in the original group, but the desire for a new Klan was fuelled as much by other existing racial discourses as by Griffith's work.

The Birth of a Nation represented the culmination of southern mythmaking, serving as an outlet for, and expression of, well-established existing motives, fears and frustrations that had been fostered since the Civil War. 1915 was the year with the highest number of lynchings throughout the twentieth century. It was the year in which

Leo Frank, the Jewish shop owner accused of raping and murdering a thirteen year old southern girl was murdered by a mob, and it was the year in which Jack Johnson, the first African-American heavyweight champion of the world was finally defeated by a white boxer, Jess Willard. *Birth*, like the modern Klan was a product of (and in turn a contributing factor to) a violent, racist culture. The demand for a Klan did not emerge purely from this film, but rather from the existing discourses and concerns that the film fed into. The film was however the most powerful presentation of these fears, and so it is important to look more closely at the context in which both *Birth* and the modern Klan were created.

Motivations behind the Klan: 1915-1920

The Birth of a Nation and the modern Klan emerged within a racist, segregated society, and both should be situated within this broader racial context. In 1915 Texas and Delaware both passed anti-miscegenation laws, while statutes concerning segregated telephone booths and schools were passed in Oklahoma and Kentucky respectively. Segregation was so firmly established that President Woodrow Wilson allowed cabinet ministers to announce plans in 1914 for segregated facilities in Federal Departments, in an effort to remove 'all cases of blacks supervising whites.'¹⁷ Wilson was an old classmate of Thomas Dixon, the author of *The Clansman*, the book on which *Birth* was based, and the President's racial ideology shared much in common with Dixon's. This institutionalised racism extended across society and intensified as African-Americans began the 'great migration,' flocking from the rural South to the urban North in search of jobs and social opportunities.¹⁸ The U.S Department of Commerce stated that 454,000 blacks left the South between 1910-1920 and their arrival in northern cities extended the existing racial tensions out of a purely southern context.¹⁹

The racist attitudes against African-Americans were perhaps most clearly displayed in the discourses surrounding Jack Johnson, whose continual defeats of every 'Great White Hope', undermined established social Darwinist thought.²⁰ Films of

Johnson's fights, which showed him punching and defeating white opponents, were banned by officials, who were concerned that these images could incite social unrest. Susan Courtney has argued recently that 'the popular fantasy of a black man beating a white woman was a direct effect of the repression of the fantasy of a black man beating a white man.'²¹ *Birth* would appear as a response to the destructive image of Johnson, re-empowering the white man through the image of the Klan. The white male was restored to his traditional role, protecting the threatened female, with *Birth* allowing white America to regulate and redefine the threat posed by Johnson. Johnson was vilified in the ring, but the threat posed outside of the ring was even greater, as he publicly enjoyed a series of relationships with white women, which effectively led to his arrest in 1913 under tenuous claims within the Mann Act.²² Randy Roberts and, more recently, Ken Burns in his documentary on Johnson presented a direct link between the racist discourses surrounding Johnson and the central theme of *Birth*.²³

This fear and now threat of miscegenation, revealed so publicly in discourse surrounding Johnson, was vividly displayed within *The Birth of a Nation*, most prominently through the image of the mulatto rapist Lynch, 'a demonized product of miscegenation.'²⁴ The central theme on screen (of miscegenation) was extended into the discourse surrounding the film. The film's author, Thomas Dixon, dismissed the N.A.A.C.P.'s objections to the film by informing white audiences that the N.A.A.C.P. encouraged members 'to fight the whites and to make mongrel marriages.'²⁵ During censorship hearings, D.W. Griffith's lawyer Martin W. Littleton defended the film in New York, by telling Mayor Mitchell that the film was a 'protest against the mongrel mixture of black and white.' This appeared as a real and legitimate concern as the miscegenation laws illustrate. Ben Tillman, the governor of South Carolina, complained shortly before the film's release that 'forty to a hundred southern maidens were annually offered as a sacrifice to the African Minotaur, and no Theseus had arisen to rid the land of this terror.'²⁶ *The Birth of a Nation* expressed this established racism, but also now offered such a Theseus in the form of the Ku Klux Klan. The film presented a glorified saviour and offered a (very dangerous) solution to existing racial tensions, but

the modern Klan, while presenting a solution to racial tension, did not follow the ideology expressed within *Birth*.

The broad racist discourses in 1915 were certainly not exclusively concerned with African-Americans. Madison Grant's influential and hugely popular book, *The Passing of a Great Race*, released in 1916 outlined the dangers of European immigration. Grant characterised the new immigrants as the 'the weak, the broken, and the mentally crippled of all races drawn from the lowest stratum of the Mediterranean basin and the Balkans, together with hordes of the wretched, submerged populations of the Polish ghettos.'²⁷ Grant was displaying not only a popular attitude, but also values expressed by academic and official sources. Dr Prescott F. Hall, a founder of the immigration restriction league, commented in 1913 that of the six leading books recently published on immigration 'all but one are strongly in favor of further restriction.'²⁸ Congress also confronted the issue in 1911 by setting up an immigration commission. The subsequent forty-two volume Dillingham Report cited respected academics as it outlined the perceived problems and dangers of the 'new' immigrants. This was followed in 1913 by the Burnett-Dillingham immigration bill, which was described by Representative Sabath as 'the most vicious, un-democratic bill ever presented to this house.'²⁹

Relations between the native-born Americans and the European immigrant population were further undermined by discourses surrounding white slavery. The white slaver dealers were widely presented as Jewish, with George Turner in 1909 famously writing in *McClure's Magazine* of the 'Jewish dealer in women.' Turner presented the Jewish slave dealer as foreign, as predominantly 'Austrian, Russian, and Hungarian Jews.' The victims of this trade were often European immigrant Jews as well, yet racial discourse clearly distinguished between the slave dealer and victim. The dealer was Jewish and foreign, but the victim was defined simply as white.³⁰ Discourse emphasised the whiteness of the victims in order to present a broader American danger and to highlight this foreign threat on American racial identity. The popular presentation of the unprotected, threatened white female further highlighted the need for the native-born white Protestant American to reclaim his masculinity by protecting traditional

femininity. Richard Maltby suggests that the terms of the debates allowed feminists and male reformers 'to see themselves as rescuers of slaves' but the imagery also offered an important precursor to *Birth*, and to the establishment of a modern Klan, that would protect threatened women from an enemy alien.³¹ The white slave discourses presented European Jews as a threat within American society, and immigration, America's imperialist ambitions and now the impending European conflict all brought America into closer contact with foreign groups and provoked debate about the effect these foreign influences would have on American identity. By 1915 racist discourses responded as clearly to European, and in particularly Jewish immigrants as to African Americans. This is most clearly revealed in the discourses surrounding Leo Frank.³²

In this hugely publicised case, Leo Frank, a prominent northern metropolitan Jew, was tried and convicted of the murder of Mary Phagan, despite a convincing level of evidence pointing towards the African American factory janitor, Jim Conley. Joel Williamson suggests that the public was keen to avoid the idea of a black rapist, as they wanted 'menaces [that were] more manageable,' and the Frank case would appear at first to reveal a shift in racist ideology, with a more modern danger presented. This Jewish threat appeared within an urban, business environment, but this new target, while repositioned within a modern context, still responded to the same fears expressed within *Birth*. As Nancy MacLean wrote, 'Paternalistic outlooks dominated the campaign against Frank,' with Mary Phagan increasingly portrayed (and manufactured) by the 'non-elite adult white population' as almost the incarnate of Flora from *Birth*. Just as Flora had jumped to her death in *Birth* to preserve her honour, white Southerners retained a 'staunch insistence that Phagan died to preserve her chastity.'³³

The popular reaction to the Frank case revealed an ostracised section of the white South increasingly concerned about the stability of social order, changing gender roles and urbanisation.³⁴ These were fears also clearly expressed within *Birth* and were a response to the emergence of a modern society, in which traditional values were redefined. Thomas Schlereth suggested that by 1915 'materialism had become Americanism.' His observation was prompted by the Panama Pacific Exposition, which opened in San Francisco less than two weeks after the première of *Birth* in Los Angeles

in February 1915, and which positively celebrated the move from an agrarian past into an industrial future (featuring a 'Joy Zone').³⁵ Increased urbanisation, and the growth of consumerism and leisure, exemplified, as I will show in chapter two, by the development of Hollywood and the cinema, further destabilised class and gender boundaries. Mary Phagan, as a twelve year-old factory worker, highlighted the changing role of women in society, with the female share of the workforce rising between 1900 and 1910 from 23% to 28%, while women began taking on more prominent positions. Women were increasingly calling for the vote, while rising skirt lengths (which Cooper says 'reached mid calf by 1915') and the introduction of short bobbed hair ('all the rage by 1912') produced a growing fear of female sexual empowerment.³⁶ Film and the burgeoning cosmetic business further presented women as objects of beauty, while discourses around the white slave traffic and of course Leo Frank illustrated the danger that this beauty and independence brought forth, with women unprotected in the social space. *Birth*, while not presented within a modern context, responded to and further highlighted these established anxieties brought out in the Leo Frank case.

Klan historian Wyn Craig Wade suggested that the lynching of Leo Frank in 1915, by the night-riding 'Knights of Mary Phagan' offered encouragement for a new Klan. This is also evident in contemporary discourse with Tom Watson writing in August 1915 shortly after Frank's lynching that 'another Ku Klux Klan may be organised to restore home rule.' The official Georgian state historian recognised the similarities between the lynching of Frank and the work of the original Klan, when he noted that 'no finer piece of Ku-Kluxing was ever known in Georgia,' while David Chalmers acknowledged that this lynching 'helped shape and prepare the way for the Klan.'³⁷ Wade is one of several historians who suggests that the thirty-six men that met to form the reborn Klan in 1915 were comprised mainly of men who had earlier led the lynching of Frank as members of 'the Knights of Mary Phagan'. Nancy MacLean believed that the 'truth' of the link lay less in personnel than in a common vigilante spirit, and what is evidenced in 1915 (and specifically in Georgia) is a growing demand from white Southerners to reclaim their masculinity and restore social order through vigilante violence.³⁸

The extent to which *The Birth of a Nation* reflected, rather than directed racial attitudes is indeterminate. *Birth* reacted to existing social fears, expressed most notably in discourses surrounding Johnson and Frank, but it also now presented a powerful, exciting solution to these existing racial problems. The protests and racial violence surrounding screenings of the film suggest that the film heightened racial tension, but the modern Klan did not come to prominence when *Birth* was at the peak of its popularity in 1915. Klan histories invariably begin with an account of William Simmons standing beneath a flaming cross in November 1915, but it is perhaps misleading to see 1915 as the year of the Klan's rebirth, as the Klan did not really emerge as a significant organisation until 1920. The timing of Simmons' staging encourages historians to present a link between the film and the modern Klan, but at the time of *Birth's* initial release, the Klan remained a small, local, fraternal group. In 1915 and 1916, the press and public continued to view the Klan in nostalgic terms as an outdated, now defunct group. *The Decatur Review*, a paper that would become an important source of Klan news during the 1920s, published an article entitled 'Story of the Ku Klux Klan' above a half page advertisement for *The Birth of a Nation* in January 1916. The article talked at length about the original Klan, but made no reference to any modern group.³⁹

The links between the film and the re-emergent Klan, as discussed, for example, by Maxim Simcovitch, appear to be exclusive to Atlanta, and there is very little evidence of writers discussing *Birth* in relation to a new Klan before 1920. There are occasional exceptions to this. A syndicated article, which appeared in Nebraska and Iowa during screenings of the film in these states in 1916, did suggest that 'recent outbreaks of lawless night riders in certain districts of Kentucky... smacks of the old Ku Klux Klan methods that are so strikingly set for in D.W. Griffith's photo spectacle, *The Birth of a Nation*.' The writer draws a comparison with the original Klan, claiming that 'the present night riders effect practically the same disguise as did the Ku Klux Klan,' although they do not have the 'halo of romance about them that marked the Clansman of the early after-the-war period.' The conclusion to the article suggests that these modern actions are largely unfamiliar to audiences, with the writer suggesting that this

story of a new group in Kentucky 'will strike a note of reality to those newer generations who may regard the secret organisation as somewhat of a myth.'⁴⁰

A powerful modern Klan did not emerge as a direct result of *Birth*, as *Birth* is part of a broader history of racial discourses. There are reports of Klan groups emerging in Kentucky in 1917, Birmingham, Alabama in 1918, and in Richmond in 1919, but by 1920 the Klan 'had only enrolled a few thousand men.'⁴¹ The sudden growth of the Klan five years after the release of *Birth* suggests that there were other factors, more significant than *Birth*, behind the recrudescence of this Klan. Contemporary reports emphasised the importance of the War, with Aldrich Blake writing in 1924 that the 'impetus' for the new Klan 'came as a direct result of the sudden termination of the World War.' Blake argued that 'spying and snooping became popular vocations' with the Council of the Defence and the American Protective League, which disbanded in February 1919 after attracting up to 250,000 members, encouraging citizens to spy on their neighbours.⁴²

There were certainly social anxieties prevalent after the War, which made a new Klan possible in 1920. Immigration, which had brought 14.5 million 'foreigners' into the country between 1910 and 1920, became a more pertinent issue as America became entangled in a foreign War. The War brought heightened patriotism, which the Klan later exploited. The conclusion of the War provided growing social and racial unrest, as women and African Americans were reticent to return to their pre-war positions after proving their value in the War effort, while young men and women of all races returned from Europe determined to embrace modern life. *The Bridgeport Telegram* drew a comparison with the establishment of the original Klan, recognising that thousands of other ex-soldiers were 'hungry for excitement and spoiled by army life for the humdrum of peaceful existence.'⁴³ They sought fresh excitement with new manufactured social enemies to attack. A series of bomb attacks in 1919 introduced this new social enemy, with these atrocities blamed on foreign Bolsheviks. The so-called 'Red Scare' of 1919 resulted in thousands of innocent people being jailed and deported, and presented Bolshevik Jews as the new threat to American security. It also contributed to the founding in May 1919 of the American Legion, a conservative, patriotic group that

appeared to respond to similar post-War fears as the Klan. By the end of 1919 the American Legion had over a million members.

The American Legion emerged within the same social context as the Klan, and the Klan would subsequently exploit the links with this popular and largely respected Veterans' group. *Dawn*, a Klan newspaper, wrote at length about the national commander of the American Legion, Alvin M. Owsley, observing that while Owsley 'is not a member of the Ku Klux Klan, he is said to be in favor of a thorough Americanization of the people within our domain, and is wholeheartedly in sympathy with the spirit of that for which the Ku Klux Klan stands.'⁴⁴ *Dawn* published an article entitled 'Legion Commander Would Bar Immigrants' and also reported in November 1923 that all but two of the Legion's officials were Protestant or masons. The American Legion was certainly not a direct precursor to the Klan, but it is useful to recognise the broad appeal of these conservative values and to note once more that the Klan embraced existing discourses.⁴⁵

The social climate in 1919 was a contributing factor behind the growth of the American Legion and the Klan, but it does not in itself explain the success of the Klan during the 1920s. The Klan was not an inevitable product of, or outlet for, these post-war anxieties but, rather, Klan leaders manufactured a demand and role for this new organisation within society. Robert Goldberg suggested that by 1920 there were only 4,000 or 5,000 Klansman in scattered Klans throughout Georgia, but between June 1920 and October 1921 a further 85,000 men joined the group. What then instigated this transformation and made the Klan a viable, legitimate outlet for post-war anxieties?⁴⁶

The Face at Your Window and the growth of a new Klan

Most historians credit the transformation of the Klan to two opportunist partners in the Southern Publicity Association, Mary Elizabeth Tyler and Edward Young Clarke, who were enlisted into the Klan by the Imperial Wizard, William Simmons on 7 June 1920. Tyler and Clarke brought modern business skills into this reactionary organisation, and immediately began a rigorous recruitment drive. Goldman noted that

‘Clarke and Tyler had hired an initial sales force of more than 200 Kleagles or recruiters and directed them to exploit any issue or prejudice that would lure men to the movement.’⁴⁷ They aligned the Klan with the fundamentalist movement, with prohibition, with local police authorities, adapting the existing messages of the American Legion and the Protestant Church. Their group responded to the social situation in 1920, rather than 1915, with the Klan now aggressively extending fears fostered during the War and the Red Scare, and presenting the hyphenated American (American-Jew or American-Catholic) working to undermine America. The message offered was not new but the methods used to attract support and to develop this Klan identity during the 1920s often were.

Nancy MacLean observed that Clarke and Tyler had ‘mastered the art of modern propaganda,’ and as the emergence of the modern Klan appears to coincide with the arrival of two publicists in 1920, historians may benefit from looking more closely at the propagandist devices they used. Clarke and Tyler placed huge emphasis on Kleagles (Klan recruiters), the more ambitious of whom, as Kenneth Jackson suggested, ‘utilized Klan propaganda films.’ Jackson remarks that Luther Ivan Powell, a King Kleagle prominent in Washington, commonly used the Fox film *The Face at Your Window* to attract new members to the organisation.⁴⁸

The Face at Your Window was used widely as Klan groups spread throughout 1920 and 1921 and serves as a useful example of how Kleagles used film to develop the modern Klan in the early 1920s. *The New York World* published a letter written by the King Kleagle in Tennessee in May 1921, in which he explained that ‘the Fox Film Company is sending their State representative here to see me this week and arrange for the showing of the picture, ‘The Face at Your Window,’ in this state.’ The Kleagle urged other Klansman throughout the state to organise screenings of the film.

Please let me know immediately when you wish this picture shown in your territory, and if there are any particular dates, such as the Shrine meeting at Kingsport, on which you want [it] in any of your towns.

The system is to have each of your Klansmen take with them at least one man to see the show and then at the finish produce an application and say: "Sign here." If they won't come they are not the kind of people we want anyway.⁴⁹

Kleagles used *The Face at Your Window* for recruitment, but the film and in particular the Klan's adoption of the film also helped to popularise and legitimise the modern Klan. *The Face at Your Window* was produced in conjunction with the government-supported Americanism Committee, and was one of a series of films produced after the War that appeared to endorse the patriotic and conservative values of the emerging Klan. The Americanism Committee was established in 1919, and followed on from The National Association of the Motion Picture Industry, a government-supported enterprise that had provided propaganda films during the War. The government recognised the pedagogical value of film, with Vice-President Marshall urging the Motion Picture Industry to do all in its power to strengthen American spirit. Colonel Arthur Woods, successor to Franklin K. Lane as the head of the Americanism Committee, stated in 1920 that 'there should be injected into every picture some ideas that would make better Americans,' requesting that this patriotic propaganda should run throughout all industry output.⁵⁰

These government-supported films reveal a social acceptance of the values of the Klan, and some of them, such as the anti-radical film *Bolshevism on Trial* (1919), appeared to promote the Klan more directly through the exciting image of the group. *Bolshevism on Trial* was based on a Thomas Dixon book, and concluded with 'white-garbed forces of righteousness [that] race to the rescue.' These forces, carrying the American flag and overpowering the Bolshevik threat, appeared in 1919 as the U.S. Navy rather than the Klan, but reviewers noted the close links with the Klan. *Moving Picture World* urged the government to use the film as propaganda, suggesting that they 'put up red flags and hire soldiers to tear them down,' with the film also receiving endorsement from Governor Coolidge of Massachusetts.⁵¹ The significance of these films in the growth of a modern Klan may not be easily judged, but they do reveal widespread fears around social change, urbanisation and immigration, and often

appeared positively to encourage and legitimise a patriotic response to perceived immigrant threats.

The Klan presented itself as a positive expression of the values promoted within the government-supported films, and throughout this period the Klan highlighted its own role as a legitimate, law-enforcing group, through its manufactured association with the government.⁵² *The Face at Your Window*, as one of the Americanism Committee's films, was widely promoted and endorsed by government officials. The Secretary of the Interior and head of the Americanism Committee, Franklin K. Lane urged that *The Face at Your Window* be 'exhibited in every city, town and hamlet in the United States.'⁵³ The government offered its patriotic war films to the American Legion in 1919 to promote the group and encourage recruitment, and the Americanism films certainly highlight the close ideological relationship between the American Legion and the government.⁵⁴ *The Face at Your Window* actually depicted the American Legion 'dressed in Ku Klux Klan uniforms,' and American Legion groups, for example in St Augustine, Florida organised screenings of the film to raise funds for the local Legion. Posters for *The Face at Your Window* emphasised that the film was 'endorsed by the American Legion, the Americanism Committee, the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen, and men prominent in all walks of life.'⁵⁵ The Klan reinterpreted the exciting imagery within the film, so that a Klan recruiting newsletter reported that the film 'shows the hooded figures of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan riding to the rescue.'⁵⁶ The film allowed the Klan to present itself alongside both the American government and the established, respected American Legion. A letter from the town of St Augustine in Florida acknowledged that 'by the picture the Klan is glorified and everyone goes away with the impression that the Legion and the Klan are affiliated.'⁵⁷

The adoption of this Americanism Committee film by the Klan highlights the problems the industry faced in producing patriotic pictures. *The Face at Your Window*, made by the Jewish Producer, William Fox, was initially presented as 'first, last, and always, pro-America,' but was reinterpreted through association with the Klan into a more aggressive, anti-Semitic film.⁵⁸ This would appear to have negative implications for an industry that was increasingly depicted by conservative moral reformers as a

focus of low morality, excess and foreign influence. The industry, seeking legitimacy and under increasing pressure to regulate, had little option but to support the Americanism Committee. It produced patriotic films like *The Face at Your Window* as a defence of its modernity but, in highlighting the dangers of modern life and immigration, it ultimately encouraged racist, conservative discourse and legitimised the values of these conservative groups. In the next chapter I will highlight how the Klan repeatedly condemned the film industry throughout the 1920s, presenting the film industry as its antithesis. It would appear an uncomfortable irony that the industry, in a bid to boost its own reputation, produced films that would ultimately benefit the Klan and undermine the industry. The N. A. A. C. P. noted this, when commenting on an advert for *The Face at Your Window* at the Springer Opera House in Atlanta in 1921.

The advertisement itself featured a letter of endorsement from the Imperial Wizard, William Simmons, beneath a picture of a white robed nightrider from the film (see fig. 1). Simmons' letter addressed to William Fox, the president of Fox Film read:

I have just witnessed a run of your wonderful picture entitled 'The Face at Your Window', and, I think the American people who love America, owe you quite a debt of gratitude and my only hope is that this picture may have the widest possible showing throughout the Nation.

In my opinion, this is the psychological moment for the release of this picture and I feel assured that the people of our country will profit greatly by the lesson it teaches and the thought it leaves in the mind will be of great value to America.⁵⁹

The letter was signed, 'William Joseph Simmons, Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan', and prompted a response from the N.A.A.C.P. In a letter to William Fox, the chairman of the N.A.A.C.P. asked 'the extent to which, through such apparent co-operation with William Simmons, you are ready to endorse the Ku Klux Klan,' an organisation directing propaganda 'not only against Negroes, but against Jews and Catholics.' The N.A.A.C.P. suggested that a sympathetic presentation of the Klan

WM. FOX

Presents

The colossal spectacle of an American community's supreme trial.

THE FACE AT YOUR WINDOW

Springer Opera House

Monday and Tuesday



THE FACE AT YOUR WINDOW
WILLIAM JOSEPH SIMMONS

Atlanta, Ga., April 22nd, 1931

Mr. William Fox, President
Fox Film Corporation,
New York, N. Y.

My Dear Sir:

I have just witnessed a run of your wonderful picture entitled, "THE FACE AT YOUR WINDOW," and, I think, the American people who love America, owe you quite a debt of gratitude and my only hope is that this picture may have the widest possible showing throughout the Nation.

In my opinion, this is the psychological moment for the release of this picture and I feel assured that the people of our country will profit greatly by the lesson it teaches and the thought it leaves in the mind will be of great value to America.

Yours very truly,

WILLIAM JOSEPH SIMMONS,
Imperial Wizard,
of the Ku Klux Klan.

inferred active support for all that the modern Klan now represented, but Fox's response denied all connection with the Klan, explaining that his company had 'no sympathy with such intolerance.' He explained that the advert 'did not emanate from this company' and reiterated that the film 'does not deal with the Ku Klux Klan.'⁶⁰ However, as with *Birth*, this film was adopted by Klan groups and, as part of the heightened propaganda introduced by Tyler and Clarke, it served as a catalyst for Klan growth. In Portland, Oregon in December 1921, the film was screened in front of 6,000 people at the City Auditorium, as part of a programme (which included a lecture) intended to launch the Klan in the city. *The Portland News* claimed that 'for the first time since President Wilson made his memorable tour of the United States, the Portland auditorium was filled to capacity.' The film, through its adoption by the modern Klan, legitimised the Klan and served as a recruitment tool. With film a hugely popular medium, screenings of the film also acted as high profile events, through which the modern Klan could generate publicity.⁶¹

The Klan launched itself in Denver in June 1921 by demanding the re-engagement of *The Face at Your Window* at the Rivoli Theatre. Never shy of a dramatic staging, the Klansmen sped through downtown Denver at midnight and 'holding red torchlights, affixed notices to the theatre.' Their protest was successful in persuading the exhibitor to re-engage the film, but, more significantly, the publicity generated by this stunt produced an awareness of the Klan within Denver.⁶² This stunt not only shows the Klan adopting *The Face at Your Window* once more, but also shows that the Klan recognised the publicity that could be generated through film. Indeed as we shall see, the Klan's protests against the film industry and individual films, such as Chaplin's *The Pilgrim*, throughout the 1920s, were fuelled in part by this desire for publicity.

Robert Goldberg suggests that the staged demand for *The Face at Your Window* in Denver was an early part of the 'image-making process,' with this film adopted and exploited by local Klan groups.⁶³ The film contributed to the establishment of the modern Klan, by helping with the formation of individual Klan groups throughout the country, but the film also presented an attractive image of a generic Klan group. The Klan's use of film during the 1920s stems from the popularity and success of *Birth* in

1915, but if the date of the Klan's effective re-emergence coincides with Tyler and Clarke's arrival in June 1920, then other films aside from *Birth* become significant not only in terms of Klan recruitment, but also in providing legitimacy and establishing an identity for this new national group.

At the end of 1919 Mary Pickford appeared 'dressed in the garb of the Night-riding Ku Klux Klan,' avenging her father's death as a nightrider in the popular rural melodrama *Heart O' The Hills*.⁶⁴ There is no evidence of the Klan using this film directly for recruitment, and the extent to which Mary Pickford's appearance in white robes helped the emergence of the modern Klan is entirely speculative, but the emphasis historians have placed on *Birth* in glamorising and popularising the Klan highlights the value of film as a medium for the modern Klan. As I will show in chapter three, *Heart O' The Hills* presents an accessible non-threatening Klan identity, and offers legitimacy to the Klan (and vigilante groups) shortly before the group's re-emergence. The appearance of 'America's sweetheart' Mary Pickford as a Klanswoman also helps to popularise this group beyond regional or gender defined boundaries. *Birth* revealed the importance of film in popularising and establishing a Klan identity, but the emphasis on *Birth* has directed attention away from other films. Furthermore, as the growth of the Klan in 1920 followed the arrival of two publicists, then films such as *Heart O' The Hills* and those of the Americanism Committee, such as *The Face at Your Window* surely warrant further attention.

Tyler and Clarke may not have been solely responsible for the re-emergence of the Klan, but the growth of the Klan did coincide with their arrival in June 1920.⁶⁵ The Klan was transformed from a small fraternal group, preoccupied with rituals, into a successful, national defender of Americanism. This was achieved to a large extent through publicity and propaganda, with the N.A.A.C.P. recognising the inherent publicity generated by the Klan as early as February 1921, when noting that 'as a spectacular and out-of-the-ordinary event similar to a circus, the Klan will get a good deal of publicity.' By the summer of 1921 the Klan already had an estimated 100,000 members. In September 1921 *The New York World* launched an ongoing exposé of Klan activities, which was syndicated throughout the country, and which ultimately raised

national awareness of this new Klan. The Congressional Hearings, which followed in October, were intended as an investigation into the actions and motives of the group, but rather served to provide further publicity for the modern Klan. William Simmons remarked that 'Congress gave us the best advertising we ever got. Congress made us.' This reactive, traditional organisation recognised the enormous value of modern publicity. The Klan produced newspapers, controlled publishing houses and universities and produced its own films. In many respects, though, the most prominent propagandist tool for the re-established Klan was *The Birth of a Nation*, which enjoyed an effective rebirth during the 1920s. With Kleagles operating throughout the country placing particular emphasis on publicity and propaganda, the film became a valuable, active text for the modern Klan.⁶⁶

The Birth of a Nation in the 1920s

During the 1920s modern Klansmen exploited the popularity of *Birth*, to launch and publicise new local chapters of the Klan. *The Mexia Evening News* reported in 1922 that the 'first official appearance of the Ku Klux Klan in Corsicana' came at a local screening of *Birth*. The report explained that the 'white robed figures made a profound impression.' Robert Goldberg noted that the organisers of the Grand Junction Klan in Colorado launched their membership drive in 1924 with a short engagement of the film, which was advertised with the claim, 'It will make a better American of you.' Throughout the country Kleagles adopted the film as a piece of propaganda for their modern group. For example, in Jackson, Mississippi, the *Daily Clarion Ledger* included a 'three quarters page high endorsement' of *Birth* by the Jackson Klan, in which a local Klan leader wrote 'I feel sure that all good Americans in our city and surrounding territory, both men and women will come to see this wonderful picture.'⁶⁷

During the 1920s Kleagles used *Birth* as a recruitment device to attract new members. Nancy MacLean reported that 'following a much-touted return engagement' of *Birth* in Athens, Georgia, in January 1921 the Klan 'renewed its efforts to win local men' while The N.A.A.C.P. complained in 1922 that *The Birth of a Nation* was

reproduced in New York 'as part of a campaign of the Ku Klux Klan to recruit members.' This view was seemingly justified as the Reverend Oscar Haywood, a prominent national Klan lecturer and recruiter, spoke in the papers on the week of the film's re-release, of that week's drive for Klan membership in New York.⁶⁸ *Spotlight*, an anti-Klan paper from Minneapolis suggested in 1923 that 'that single motion picture [*The Birth of a Nation*] is practically the only agent in the growth of the modern Klan.' The paper sent a telegram to D. W. Griffith, in which it stated that 'a careful investigation has revealed that the ease with which Klan solicitors are able to sell memberships is directly attributable to the romantic color cast about the Klan name by your motion picture *The Birth of a Nation*.'⁶⁹ *The Kansas City Call* also spoke negatively in 1924 of *Birth* as a 'piece of Klan propaganda,' and Maxim Simcovitch offers further examples of modern Klan groups using *Birth* for recruitment purposes in areas as geographically removed as Oregon and Virginia.⁷⁰

The Klan's exploitation of *The Birth of a Nation* was recognised by the Attorney General in Ohio, who 'ruled in 1926 that the Klan could not show the film privately.' The Klan had explained that it wished to use the picture as part of the 'educational and entertainment program for the Klan in the state.' The Klan recognised the pedagogical value of film and often used film within its entertainment bureau. Local Klan groups also arranged screenings of *Birth* in order to generate awareness of their group within the local community. The Vidalia Unit of the Klan in Georgia arranged a two day screening of the film in October 1924, and on the opening night 'Klansmen paraded through the streets making a big impression upon the citizens.' The Vidalia Klan further defined itself to the community through its presentation of the film, as the group presented itself as a charitable, religious organisation, by announcing that all of the proceeds from the screening would benefit the local churches. Furthermore, the Klan announced that 'both white and colored churches' would receive a portion of the profits, as the Klan repeatedly avoided presenting itself publicly as a racist group during the 1920s, often defining itself by religion more than race.⁷¹

The Klan used *Birth* for recruitment, but existing Klansmen also embraced the film, as they aligned themselves with the heroic group presented on screen. The Klan

newspaper *Searchlight* reported that eighteen 'white-robed figures marched solemnly into the theatre and were seated on the front row amidst the cheers of the audience' at a screening of *Birth* in McAlester, Oklahoma. Forty Klansmen in full regalia attended a screening in Danville, Virginia, while prominent Klan appearances were also reported at screenings in Rocky Mount, North Carolina and Columbus, Georgia. An article in 1922 reported that forty-eight Klansmen 'mysterious and silent in their robes and hoods of white' occupied the boxes at the Academy of Music in Richmond for the final screening of *Birth*. The article claimed that 'every eye in the crowded house focussed on them' and on three occasions during the second act of the film, the Klansmen arose in unison and raised their left arm towards the screen. This dramatic display raised public awareness of the local Klan, and served directly to associate the modern group with the Klan depicted on screen. A report for the screening in Richmond suggested that there was a round of applause when the Klansmen made their staged entrance.⁷²

Local Klan newspapers advertised screenings of the film, with *Fiery Cross*, for example, urging 'Good old one hundred percenters - one more chance to see the most wonderful production that ever was produced. KLANSMEN Don't miss this picture.' *The New York World*, which had published an extensive exposé of the new Klan during the previous year, complained of a 1922 screening of *Birth* in New York that the 'audience seemed to be composed largely of modern Klansman,' while *Variety* reported in 1922 that 'every early appearance of a Klansman on the screen was a signal for half the audience to burst into applause along with minor hissing.'⁷³ Another exhibitor in New York in 1923 reported that 'from the applause when the KKK appeared I think my audience consisted chiefly of them (Klansmen),' explaining that on account of the popularity among new Klan members, the film had fared better than on its previous release five years earlier.⁷⁴ The film was now presented in relation to the modern Klan, with audience responses representative not simply of the film's quality, but rather of the viewer's attitudes towards the modern Klan. During the 1920s the film became synonymous with the modern group, with screenings of the film provoking fierce debates around the Klan.

In New York in 1921, five people were arrested outside the Capital Theatre where *Birth* was showing, for distributing leaflets signed by the N.A.A.C.P. The leaflet was entitled 'Stop the Ku Klux Klan propaganda in New York' and began by claiming that 'The Birth of a Nation exalts the infamous KKK which has been publicly accused of voting to blow up or burn Negro school houses in 1921.' The screening of *Birth* was now used as an opportunity to attack the modern Klan publicly. A closer look at the leaflet, which included observations such as 'Do you know that the KKK is not only anti-Negro but anti-Jewish and anti-Catholic?' supports Fleener-Marzec's observation that 'the pamphlet dealt more with arguments against the Klan than with arguments against the film per se.' Screenings of the film presented an opportunity to attack or support this modern group, and by 1921 Klansmen, censors and social reformers all presented the film in relation to the modern Klan.⁷⁵

On its original release in 1915, criticisms against *The Birth of a Nation* largely concerned the presentation of race within the film, with the N.A.A.C.P. making no mention of the Klan when giving five reasons why the film should be banned in February 1915. During the 1920s, the Klan became a prominent basis for opposition to the film. *Birth* was banned in Boston in May 1921, after protests from not only the N.A.A.C.P. but also the Knights of Columbus. The Knights of Columbus, as a Catholic group, were not concerned by the anti African-American racism within the film, but rather with the promotion of the Klan, as by 1921 *Birth* was seen to promote this re-emerging anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic Klan. *Variety* reported the ban in Boston, explaining that, despite playing in Boston 'for 16 consecutive weeks six years ago,' *Birth* was now officially barred from the city on a 'riot charge.' The article highlighted this fresh problem for the film, with the public hearing (attended by '600 Negroes') asserting that *Birth* was 'part of a southern campaign of propaganda of nationwide scope designed to stimulate the popularity of the Ku Klux Klan idea and to establish branches of gang-assassins throughout the country.'⁷⁶

In July 1921, the N.A.A.C.P. wrote to the Division of Film Censorship in Columbus, Ohio, urging them to stop screenings of *The Birth of a Nation*. It quoted the recent action in Boston, explaining that the board of welfare there felt that 'the play

would render possible increased friction between the races.’ The N.A.A.C.P. added that the City Prosecutor of Los Angeles had recently banned the film ‘for all time from the city because it might endanger racial feeling.’⁷⁷ The racial tension historically generated by screenings of the film remained a primary concern for the N.A.A.C.P, but this racial tension was now fuelled and epitomised by the modern Klan. The N.A.A.C.P.’s assistant secretary explained in August 1922 that ‘our opposition to *The Clansman* and *The Birth of a Nation* and other such plays and films is based on the fact that they do glorify the Ku Klux Klan and they have been the breeder of riots and race friction wherever shown.’⁷⁸ *Birth* was now generating this racial tension, not only through its negative depictions of African Americans, but also, more specifically, through its positive presentation of the Klan. As a result of *Birth*, the Klan became a subject of close censorial scrutiny throughout the 1920s. The Motion Picture Commission of New York twice refused a license to the Catholic production, *The Knight of the Eucharist* (1922), a film that vividly depicted Klan violence. Pictures that depicted ethnic and foreign Klan targets, such as *Shadows of the West* (1921), which presented Japanese enemies, faced heavy cuts from censors, while the Klan’s own film, *The Traitor Within* was banned from the popular Klan state of Ohio in 1924.⁷⁹

The censorship discourses surrounding *Birth* recognise the importance of the film to the modern Klan, and present the film as virtually inseparable from this modern group. In Kansas the film had been banned since 1915, but Gerald Butters noted that by 1923 opponents of the film presented *Birth* as ‘part of a campaign to stimulate the Ku Klux Klan.’ The censorship discussions surrounding *Birth* in Kansas now encompassed the broader issue of the modern Klan, and Butters even suggested that Governor Davis’ decision to support an overturning of the ban in 1923 may have been motivated by a desire to gain the support of the increasingly influential Kansas Klan.⁸⁰

Association with the modern Klan redefined *Birth*, and illustrated the enduring propagandist power of this film. *Variety* had reported in September 1921 that ‘New Detroit is dark this week, the police department having put the ban on ‘*The Birth of a Nation*’ owing to its scenes of the Ku Klux Klan.’ A syndicated story exposing the Klan was running in *The Detroit Free Press* at this time, ensuring that the Klan scenes were

now topical. A further article, headlined 'Ku Klux Klan Exposé hits 'Birth of a Nation's' Tour,' featured in the same edition of *Variety*. The article acknowledged that the 'K.K.K. excitement is causing trouble' for the film, but interestingly also recognised that in Baltimore the publicity surrounding the modern Klan was boosting interest in the picture: 'the references made to the picture in connection with the exposé have been in the nature of advertising for the film.'⁸¹ Two projectionists were arrested for showing the film to a packed auditorium in Chicago in February 1924, with the city objecting 'also [to] shots of the Klansman.' The Klan scenes were now problematic, but they were also exciting and lucrative. After the case against the film was indefinitely adjourned, *Variety* reported that the film played at the theatre for four weeks and 'set a box office attendance record for the theatre.'⁸²

Birth: Creating a Klan identity

The Birth of a Nation was closely associated with the modern Klan, as I have shown, and appeared as an important piece of propaganda for Kleagles throughout the 1920s. The film was not just used to recruit new members, but also served in legitimising and establishing an identity for this new group, as the film presented an attractive, exciting image of the Klan. *Searchlight* suggested in 1922 that *Birth* 'has been far more potent than any other one factor in setting the Klansmen in their true light,' and the film now boosted the national popularity of the modern Klan through its presentation of a generic Klan group.⁸³

The Birth of a Nation certainly helped establish this modern Klan as a national, rather than purely southern organisation. Griffith's film, initially released for the fiftieth anniversary of the Confederate defeat, transformed a carefully- manufactured southern myth of the 'Lost Cause' into a national history.⁸⁴ Mark Vance, writing for *Variety* in 1915, wrote that Griffith 'knew what kind of picture would please all white classes.'⁸⁵ This southern myth now focused on divisions of colour rather than region, with Lincoln presented as a national hero, a unifying symbol and as the Father of the Nation. The South rebuilds herself 'under Lincoln's fostering hand' and pines after his death that

‘our best friend is gone.’ Similarly Elsie and Flora are northern women displaying traditionally southern qualities (honour and loyalty), while the marriage of the southern hero and northern heroine at the end of the film offers an unsubtle symbolic representation of the marriage between the North and the South. The film served as an assimilation narrative, with the film’s conclusion stating that ‘the former enemies of North and South are united in common defence of the Aryan birthright.’⁸⁶

Griffith recognised the national appeal, not only of this racist ideology but of the Klan itself, stating before the film’s production that ‘our picture would have nation wide appeal if we can highlight the drama, especially the battle and Klan scenes.’ This national appeal was essential for the financial success of this hugely expensive film, as Thomas Dixon recognised when he noted that the New York box office could outdo ‘the entire South in a single week’s grosses.’ A *New York Times* advertisement reported that the film had grossed \$616,000 at the New York Liberty Theatre during 1915 and, according to Seymour Stern, by January 1916 the film had enjoyed 6,266 performances in the area of Greater New York alone.⁸⁷ Jane Gaines now talks of the ‘predictable North/South split’ in the reception of *Birth* but, as Bruce Chadwick recognised, initially ‘in fact *Birth*’s biggest grosses came from Northern and Western cities.’ The sectional divisions that Gaines refers to may have appeared more pronounced during the 1920s once the modern Klan was established. A National Board of Review Survey published in 1923 listed *Birth* as the most popular film among southern boys, and wrote that ‘in these cases true sectional influences affect their choices.’ During the 1920s, with the film now closely aligned to the modern Klan, *Birth* was often presented as a product of the South, yet it still largely retained its national appeal.⁸⁸

The New York Times, which had initially lauded the film, offered a more detached verdict on the 1922 re-release. It explained that *Birth* ‘is no longer the best film ever made, but it will always be historic.’ The review dismissed the threat and relevance of the film, describing the film as ‘independently interesting as a motion picture.’ The Klan had failed to establish a strong following in cosmopolitan New York, and there was certainly a growing awareness of the potential trouble generated by this film, in light of the earlier protests and also of the race riots that New York had faced

during 1919. *The New York Times* acknowledged that the ‘treatment of the story is such as to inflame passions today’ and recognised that the emergence of a modern Klan redefined the film, when it added that the ‘social value of its revival at the present time is open to question- to say the least.’ *Variety* explained the problem when it suggested that ‘the recent and present publicity regarding the Klan situation made it [*Birth*] problematic.’ The initial reception and controversies surrounding *Birth* greatly directed its subsequent receptions and the topical interest in the Klan made Klan appearances on screen increasingly controversial during the 1920s. By the 1920s, *Birth* was presented and viewed as a piece of Klan propaganda, which may have affected its reception in areas which were largely opposed to the modern Klan, or which were particularly sensitive to racial tension. However, this sectional division would appear largely manufactured and exaggerated. The modern Klan was certainly not a southern phenomenon and, similarly, *The Birth of a Nation* continued to perform well on a national level. *The Wichita Daily Times* acknowledged this, when writing that ‘east and west, north and south, it [*Birth*] has packed theatres to the doors during its 1921 revival.’⁸⁹

The national popularity of *Birth* helped to legitimise the modern Klan as a national organisation. Mark Calney acknowledges the influence of *Birth*, writing that ‘The Birth of a Nation was literally a recruitment film for the Ku Klux Klan, and the target of its revival was not principally the South but was the old Union strongholds of the Northern states.’ The modern Klan of the 1920s was a truly national organisation, as powerful in the North, and in particular mid-Western states like Ohio and Indiana, as in the South.⁹⁰ This is an important shift even from the Leo Frank case. The press presented Frank as a northern businessman, invading and raping the South, like the carpetbaggers before him. His case created a clear racial and regional division, yet *Birth* presented a heroic group, protecting traditional southern values on a national level. The film may not have been solely responsible for the re-emergence of the Klan, but these national iconographic images of the Klan helped to extend this modern Klan out of its predecessor’s purely southern context.

Thomas Dixon certainly noted the national influence of his film when he wrote to President Wilson, an old classmate of his, in September 1915. He triumphantly exclaimed that 'this play is transforming the entire population of the North and West into sympathetic Southern voters.' He evidently believed that the ideology within his film was spreading throughout the nation, as he also wrote to Wilson's secretary, Joseph Tumulty in 1915 claiming that 'every man who comes out of one of the theatres is a southern partisan for life.'⁹¹ Gunnar Myrdal appeared to support Dixon's view, writing that it was *The Birth of a Nation* that showed 'Southerners had discovered the saleability of southern mythology on the northern market.'⁹² However, a closer look at the modern Klan during the 1920s suggests that *Birth* influenced the Klan in image far more than ideology, with Dixon's racist values carrying considerably less influence than his exciting imagery.

Wyn Craig Wade recognised the national interest in *Birth*, but he distinguished between a 'festive' response in the North and a 'profound' sacred response further south. Wade's distinction helps in part to explain the initial success of the film in the North, as he writes of a 'Ku-Klux fever' with Klan memorabilia and Klan costumes worn to balls throughout the region. Wade emphasised the popular appeal of 'improvised' Klan costumes at parties in the North in 1915, and it was the exciting image of the Klan that Griffith later claimed drew him towards the picture.⁹³ He recalled in his autobiography first reading *The Clansman*, 'I could just see these Klansmen in a movie with their white robes flying.' In *The Rose of Kentucky* (1911) Griffith had presented exciting, fast-riding night riders on horses, but the Klansmen in this earlier film were attacking the film's hero, with the hero proving his virility by fighting against the Klan.⁹⁴ Griffith apologists have often referred to this film when attempting to defend the charges of racism labelled against him. The racist values of Griffith, while perhaps products of their time, are extremely clearly displayed within *Birth*, but *The Rose of Kentucky* might suggest that Griffith was more concerned with the exciting image and costume of the Klan, than with the motives and values of the group. It was this distinctive, spectacular image that was exploited on film in the 1920s and it was the image within *Birth* that most influenced the modern Klan.

An article from 1924 entitled 'Picturesque Ku-Klux-Klan rituals based upon fiction under guise of tradition' supported the notion that the costume of the modern Klan was copied, not from historical fact, but from *Birth*. This costume, which Griffith admitted was created 'solely from the viewpoint of theatrical effectiveness,' became the distinctive uniform for the modern group, while *Birth* also established the group's defining imagery. Maxim Simcovitch wrote that 'the figure of the Klansman on the rearing horse was used throughout the 1920s in advertisements and on billboards' for the modern Klan, while the Fiery Cross, a symbolic representation of the modern Klan, appeared for the first time in Dixon's writing and was glamorised through Griffith's film.⁹⁵

John Inscoe, in his assessment of the controversy and social unrest caused by the play and film in North Carolina, also suggested that Dixon's ideology within *Birth* was less influential on society than Dixon himself may have claimed. Inscoe argued that Dixon's play provoked 'racial hostility and considerable controversy' when it played during the first decade of the twentieth century, but suggested that *Birth*, while provoking a nostalgia for the lost cause and a defensive anger at northern protests, did not provoke the same level of 'Negrophobia' in the South.⁹⁶ I have already offered some evidence to challenge this argument, but I would agree that it was the imagery and romanticised values (rather than the extreme racial violence) of the film that were embraced on a national level during the 1920s. Inscoe noted that 'even in Atlanta, where the film's showing instigated the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, any animosity towards blacks seems to have been curiously absent from the new organization's motives or goals.' The racist ideology within *Birth* was not directly transferred into the modern Klan, as the modern Klan responded to fresh racial discourses after the War and the Red Scare of 1919.⁹⁷ As I will show, the modern Klan defined itself in terms of religion and national identity as much as race.

Critical work on *The Birth of a Nation* has focussed predominantly on the issue of race, defining the Klan within *Birth* as a racist group attacking its African-American opponents. Yet, Joan Silverman highlighted that the villains within *Birth* are defined not only by race, but also by drink, and this may provide a closer ideological link with the

modern Klan of the 1920s. In *Birth*, Lynch is 'drunk with power and wine,' while the characters in the South Carolina legislature swig alcohol. Gus hides out in 'White-arm Joe's gin mill' and the Klan is depicted attacking the saloon. Silverman re-evaluated *Birth* as not only a racist text, but as a warning against drink, and this would certainly appear more relevant to a modern Klan, that in many areas presented itself as a protector of prohibition. Silverman acknowledged that Griffith had earlier 'personally created twelve specifically pro-temperance, anti-drink one and two reel films and scores of others with strong temperance messages.' The Klan within *Birth* can certainly be reinterpreted within the context of the modern Klan, not simply as a racist group, but as a moral force roaming against the evils of drink. However, the continued controversy surrounding *Birth* ensured that, even during the 1920s, the Klan within the film was popularly presented as a purely racist group, and I would maintain that Klansmen in the 1920s exploited the imagery more than the ideology within *Birth*.⁹⁸

The exciting iconic image of the Klan within *Birth* helped popularise and legitimise the Klan as a national organisation, but the film also offered legitimacy to the modern Klan by presenting a link with the earlier, romanticised model of the group. An article that featured in *The Bridgeport Telegram* in 1924 questioned the links between the original Klan and its modern successor. The writer suggested that 'the present Ku Klux Klan never loses an opportunity to proclaim itself the legitimate successor and heir to the famous society of Reconstruction days in the South,' believing that for this the modern Klan relies heavily on 'the novels of Thomas Dixon and the moving picture, *The Birth of a Nation*.' The article suggested that the Klan described by Dixon and Griffith was an idealised, scarcely recognisable version of the original Klan, but crucially added that 'it is that Klan rather than the historical one, which forms the model for the present organisation.' The film offered a link to an idealised, national memory, legitimising and popularising the modern Klan by allowing the group a history and romanticised background.⁹⁹

The Birth of a Nation, presented by Klansmen and opponents alike in relation to the modern Klan, established this link between the old and new Klan. This link, while commercially attractive, heightened the controversy and censorship surrounding the

film, and so producers sought to dismiss any connection with the modern Klan. *Birth* was only shown in New York in 1922 after Griffith had agreed to insert a title at the end of the film, explaining that after Reconstruction ‘the originators of the Klan put away their uniforms and disbanded the organisation forever.’ Roy Aitken reported that a ‘standard speech’ was often made by a local minister before a screening of the film, in which the minister would explain that the Klan depicted on screen ‘bears not the slightest relation to the occasional sheeted bigots of today.’¹⁰⁰ Klansmen, censors and exhibitors emphasised the close links between *Birth* and the modern Klan, and the Klan profited from its association with this popular, exciting, national film. However, the modern Klan actually bore little relation to the Klan depicted on screen, with its values and actions increasingly distanced from the romanticised, and racist ideals of Dixon and Griffith.

Both D.W. Griffith and Thomas Dixon publicly criticised the modern Klan, despite their apparent influence in the popularisation of this group. Griffith recognised the parallels between his idealised Klan and the modern organisation. He remarked that ‘it may be flattering to find out that the present Klan has copied the picture so closely, but it is not a welcome thought to me, that I have been in any way responsible for the spread of this order.’ He added that he saw the modern Klan as a ‘menace’ and reiterated that he never intended to ‘give any impetus to a revival of the Klan itself.’¹⁰¹ *Spotlight*, an anti-Klan paper, wrote a telegram to D. W. Griffith in 1923, urging him to ‘paint the Klan in its true light and shatter the pretty but false illusion created in *The Birth of a Nation*.’ The paper suggested that Griffith create a new film to ‘undo the damage unwittingly done,’ and although no such film was produced, Griffith regularly criticised the modern organisation. The modern Klan appeared equally critical of Griffith, with the Klan newspaper *Dawn*, condemning the ‘filth promoting Griffith’ for his ‘vilely suggestive and abominable’ new film *The White Rose* (1923).¹⁰²

Thomas Dixon also distanced himself from the modern Klan, again suggesting that the modern organisation was heavily removed from the glorified vision he had presented. He accused the Klan of stealing the livery of the original order, but again saw only superficial similarities between the two groups. Dixon gave a talk condemning the

Klan in New York in January 1923. He offered his 'outspoken contempt' for the modern Klan and remarked that 'The Klan assault upon the foreigner is the acme of stupidity and inhumanity. We are all foreigners except the few Indians we haven't killed.' In an earlier speech, Dixon had stated that 'I cannot express my disapproval of the Klan in too strong terms,' but despite his objections, the modern Klan recognised the influence of his popular, romanticised depictions of the original Klan, with a Baltimore branch even naming themselves the 'Thomas Dixon Klan'.¹⁰³

Dixon's opposition to the modern Klan can also be seen in his work. The central theme of his 1924 novel *The Black Hood* is the resurgence of the disbanded Klan under unscrupulous, uncontrolled leadership, and he closes his book with the Army Colonel stating, 'there is room for just one uniform in this republic and I am wearing it.' *Imperial Night-Hawk*, an official Klan publication, heavily criticised Dixon in 1923 for 'planning to market a little hatred in the form of "The Traitor", a film condemning the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.' *The Traitor* was based on Dixon's 1907 novel of the same name, and was effectively an earlier draft of *The Black Hood*. Anthony Slide recognised that Dixon 'had long wanted to produce a film attacking the modern Klan,' providing evidence of his intentions as early as 1922. Dixon himself wrote in the stock promotion circular for *The Traitor* that he would 'strike a deadly blow' to the organisation. *Imperial Night-Hawk* maintained that Dixon was 'in the game for the money' presenting Dixon in exactly the same terms as the supposedly money obsessed Jewish producers it regularly condemned.¹⁰⁴

Dixon and Griffith's opposition to the modern Klan would appear to suggest that the new group shared little in common with its earlier namesake, even if their work continued to serve as propaganda for this new organisation. *The New York Times* wrote in 1923, in an article entitled 'Let the Klan Die', that the modern organisation 'is not the old Ku Klux Klan and not enough like it to appeal to descendants of the men of standing who supported that order.'¹⁰⁵ Perceptions of the original Klan were heavily shaped by the work of Dixon and Griffith, but their romanticised Klan certainly appeared in contrast to the violent, corrupt, anti-Semitic group presented, for example, within the *New York World* exposé of September 1921. The *New York World* listed four

killings, one mutilation, one branding with acid, forty-one floggings, five kidnappings, and forty-three individuals forced to leave town. All were attributed to the Klan, a group that was said to appeal to 'the ignorant, the cruel, the cowardly and the vengeful.' The Imperial Wizard of the Klan, William Simmons, defended his organisation barely a month later at a Congressional hearing. He presented a unified, idealised Klan that was 'purely a fraternal and beneficiary order,' and that was 'opposed to profiteering in race prejudice and religious bigotry.'¹⁰⁶ Evidently notions of what the Klan represented varied enormously, but Dixon certainly sought to differentiate his romantic vision of the Reconstruction Klan from the modern group. He saw a huge disparity in motive for this modern Klan, criticising, in particular, its perceived hatred of the Jews, a group he described as the 'greatest race of people God ever created.'¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

The Birth of a Nation was a contributing factor in the development of both the modern Klan and the Hollywood film industry. Traditional historians in both fields may have overstated the influence of this single film, but *Birth* was part of a series of discourses that directed the formal and industrial development of film, and also a part of broader racial discourses that the Klan responded to. The film may not have been directly responsible for the birth of the Klan as many have claimed, but it helped to legitimise and popularise the group throughout the 1920s. The modern Klan was heavily removed from the idealised group presented in *Birth*, responding to fresh targets and social concerns after the Great War and the Red Scare, but the exciting imagery within the film still helped in formulating a Klan identity, as discourses continued to emphasise the close links between the film and the modern Klan. This single film appeared as a representation of the generic modern group, as a tool for recruitment, and as a battleground for broader disputes regarding the modern Klan. As the modern Klan placed particular emphasis on propaganda and publicity, *Birth* became increasingly important to the group, yet existing histories continue to present *Birth* as an isolated example, rather than as a defining influence in the Klan's more widespread use of film.

The success and controversial reception of this film illustrated the broader value of film to the Klan. It highlighted the dangers and commercial possibilities of Klan representation to the film industry, and it uncovered film as a medium for broader social debates between the Klan and their opponents.

The public disputes surrounding screenings of *Birth* also highlighted the Klan's manipulation of film discourses. When describing the banning of *Birth* in Chicago in 1924, the Klan publication *Dawn* reported that the 'Roman Catholic municipal Police administration' had stopped the film for fear that 'it might engender racial and religious hatred.' *Birth* presented an opportunity for the modern Klan to extend its message, not only through the representation on screen, but through the discourses generated off-screen. Despite *Dawn* claiming that the film was concerned with the original Klan and 'was produced before the modern patriotic organisation was developed,' the modern Klan used the film as an opportunity to attack its depicted target, the African-American, and its new manufactured enemies, the Jews and Catholics. *Dawn* created a clear sense of injustice at the treatment of the film, complaining that the Police did not interfere in 'Roman propaganda plays, such as "The Hunch Back of Notre Dame," "The White Rose," nor such degrading spectacles as Pola Negri's "Sheik" picture, in which she, portraying a white woman, made love to an African.' When *Dawn* reported the arrest of the two projectionists working at the theatre, it pointed out that all of the arresting officers and indeed the judge involved in the case had Irish names. The incident was presented as a very personal confrontation between the Klan and the Catholics.¹⁰⁸ There were further disputes throughout the 1920s, yet it was not merely *Birth* that triggered these clashes, as the Klan embraced and redefined conservative criticisms against film representation, Hollywood and the cinema as a social space, in order to attack the perceived foreign influences operating within the industry. The Klan, thus, promoted and defined itself not simply through its exploitation of particular films, but also through its highly publicised criticisms and protests against individual films, and, more broadly, the film industry.

¹ Michael Rogin, "The Sword Became a Flashing Vision": D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* from *The Birth of a Nation*, edited by Robert Lang (Rutgers University Press, 1994), 257. Contemporary reports often emphasised the stylistic advances displayed within *Birth*, and even the West Coast Secretary of the Negro Welfare League commented that 'It (*Birth*) was a masterpiece and from an artistic point of view, the finest thing of its kind I have ever witnessed' See Thomas Cripps, "The Year of *The Birth of a Nation*" from *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900-1942* (Oxford University Press, 1977), 53.

² James Chandler, 'The Historical Novel goes to Hollywood: Scott, Griffith, and Film Epic Today' reprinted in *The Birth of a Nation* edited by Robert Lang (1994), 225. 'The Man who invented Hollywood' was also the title of Griffith's autobiography. Lillian Gish reiterated established film history when she wrote that 'because of *The Birth of a Nation*, the movies, which had been a struggling art form, were suddenly transformed into a multi million dollar industry. Control began to shift from directors operating on shoestrings to businessmen.' Lillian Gish, *The Movies, Mr Griffith and Me* (W.H. Allen, 1969), 158.

³ Historians such as Robert Lang and Melvyn Stokes have highlighted the institutional as well as cultural influence of Griffith's work, but once more these industrial changes occurred gradually.

⁴ Shifts in film technique and in exhibition practice were certainly apparent in European films released before *Birth*. Adolph Zukor had exhibited the French film *Queen Elizabeth*, starring the stage actress Sarah Bernhardt at prestigious legitimate theatres during 1912. A specifically composed score accompanied the film. The eight-reel Italian epic, *Quo Vadis* played for months in New York City during 1913 and charged \$1.50 admission. Regulatory changes included a series of municipal government bills passed after 1910, which enforced improved safety standards, and an ordinance passed in New York City in 1913 that established stricter building code regulations for exhibition halls. For a detailed consideration of the rise of these movie palaces, see Neal Gabler, *An Empire of their Own, How the Jews invented Hollywood* (Doubleday, 1998); Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema, 1907-1915* (1990) 121-36; Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment, The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915-1928* (1990), 9-25. See also Steven J. Ross, *Working Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (Princeton University Press, 1998), 30-33. For a brief overview of some of these industrial pressures, see Lee Grieveson and Peter Kramer, 'Feature Films and Cinema Programmes' from *The Silent Cinema Reader* (Routledge, 2004), 187-195.

⁵ This is frequently retold in Klan histories, for example David Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (Third Edition, New York, 1981), 30. Wyn Craig Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America* (Simon and Schuster, 1987), 146. The adverts from December 4th 1915 are reprinted in Kevin Brownlow's *Hollywood: The Pioneers* (Book Club Associates, 1979), 66.

⁶ David Chalmers (1981), 28. William G. Shepherd, 'How I Put Over the Klan', *Collier's Magazine* (14/7/28), 35. This is retold by Maxim Simcovitch, 'The Impact of Griffith's "Birth of a Nation" on the Modern Ku Klux Klan', *Journal of Popular Film*, 1:1 (1972: Winter), 46. Simcovitch talks of Simmons and his followers parading in front of the theatre on the night of the première, as a 'troop of horsemen dressed in the sheets of the Ku Klux Klan' rode in advance of screenings.

⁷ Wade (1987), 145-148. John Inscoe, 'The Clansman on Stage and Screen: North Carolina Reacts', *North Carolina Historical Review*, Volume LXIV, Number 2, April 1987, 161. Simcovitch (1972), 45-46.

⁸ William Randel, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Century of Infamy* (Chilton Books, 1965). David Chalmers (1981), 29. Both suggest that Simmons outlined the details for his new fraternal order while convalescing in hospital. Randel dates this hospital stay to 1911, while Chalmers (and other sources) suggest it was 1915. Other historians have considered the role of *Birth* in popularising the Klan. John Hope Franklin suggested that *Birth* 'was the midwife in the rebirth of the most viscous terrorist organization in the history of the United States.' This suggests that the film is a facilitator, helping to deliver this new Klan to a wider audience. See John Hope Franklin, 'Birth of a Nation- Propaganda as History', *The Massachusetts Review* (Autumn, 1979), 431. Mark Calney viewed the film in the context of the emerging Klan and Hollywood, suggesting that *Birth* was the 'mediator for these two phenomena' rather than the motivation

behind the new group. Mark Calney, 'D.W.Griffith and "The Birth of a Monster": How the Confederacy Revived the KKK and Created Hollywood,' *The American Almanac* (11/1/93). Nancy MacLean, in *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 12, suggests that the film 'released in the same year as the second Klan's creation' boosted the profile of the Klan. However, she does not draw a direct link between the film and the modern Klan.

⁹ Linda Williams, 'Race Melodrama and *The Birth of a Nation*', from *The Silent Cinema Reader*, edited by Lee Grieveson and Peter Kramer (Routledge, 2004), 250.

¹⁰ Harlow Hare, *Boston American* (18/7/15) reprinted in Lang (1994), 188. Harold Stearns, 'Art in Moving Pictures', *New Republic*, Vol. 4 (25/9/15), 207.

¹¹ Roy E. Aitken, *The Birth of a Nation Story* (Delinger, 1965), 40. Aitken added that 'I must admit that the hair on my head tingled as the hard riding, white-robed Klansmen thundered by on sweat-streaked horses.'

¹² 'Birth of a Nation at the Cumings', *Fitchburg Daily Sentinel* (7/9/15), 8.

¹³ Fleener-Marzec (1980, p.483) claims that screenings of *Birth* were challenged at least one hundred and twenty times between 1915 and 1973. The N.A.A.C.P. claimed that it had achieved bans in five states and nineteen cities upon the film's initial release. The account of Brocj comes from *Chicago American* (24/4/16), and can be found in the *National Board of Review Papers* at the New York Public Library.

¹⁴ *Mutual Film Corp. v. Industrial Commission of Ohio*, 236 U.S. 230 (1915).

¹⁵ Fleener-Marzec (1980), 135 quoting from Henry James Forman, *Our Movie-Made Children* (MacMillan Company 1933), 127.

¹⁶ *The Atlanta Constitution* (30/12/15), 6.

¹⁷ John Milton Cooper Jr., *Pivotal Decades: The United States, 1900-1920* (W.W. Norton and Co., 1990), 206. The death of Booker T. Washington, arguably the most respected African-American amongst whites, in November 1915 further undermined the social and political influence of African-Americans.

¹⁸ Carole Marks has challenged the traditional accounts of this move from the rural South to the urban North, arguing that the 'majority of migrants were not farm labourers but non-agricultural workers.' See Carole Marks, *Black Workers and the Great Migration North*, *Phylon*, Vol. 46, no.2 (2nd Quarter, 1985), 148-161.

¹⁹ These figures are reprinted in Carole Marks, *Phylon* (1985), 148. See also Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (Picador, 1995), 73. The migration of African Americans to the urban North provoked anxiety particularly amongst poorer whites who saw this movement as a direct threat to their social and economic positions. For a brief contemporary consideration of this process, see Guy B. Johnson, 'The Negro Migration and its Consequences', *The Journal of Social Forces*, Vol.2, No.3 (March 1924), 404-408. Johnson considers the consequences of the migration, concluding that 'the race problem cannot remain sectional- that is certain.' It is difficult to offer a date at which this 'great migration' began, but a number of historians have used 1915 as a starting point for their studies. For example see Spencer R. Crew, 'The Great Migration of Afro-Americans, 1915-1940' from *Monthly Labor Review* 111 (1987).

²⁰ Social Darwinism stated that the white man was scientifically superior to his black counterpart.

²¹ Susan Courtney, *Hollywood Fantasies of Miscegenation: Spectacular Narratives of Gender and Race, 1903-1967* (Princeton University Press, 2005), 15. See also 50-61.

²² For an excellent detailed account on the discourses surrounding Johnson and the censorship history surrounding his fights, see Lee Grieveson, 'Fight Films 1910-12', *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early Twentieth Century America* (University of California Press, 2004).

²³ See Randy Roberts, *Papa Jack: Jack Johnson and the Era of White Hopes* (Robson Books, 1998), Geoffrey C. Ward, *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2004). See also Ken Burns' *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson* (PBS Paramount, 2004).

²⁴ Robert Lang, *The Birth of a Nation* (Rutgers, 1994), 19.

²⁵ Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black* (Oxford University Press, 1977), 58. The N.A.A.C.P. criticism was widely viewed as an attack on free speech, with the racism presented within the film making many whites wary of a black group attempting to demonstrate power.

²⁶ Mark Calney, 'D.W.Griffith and "The Birth of a Monster": How the Confederacy Revived the KKK and Created Hollywood', *The American Almanac* (11/1/93). The quote from Ben Tillman is found in Robert Lang (ed.), *The Birth of a Nation* (1994), 17

²⁷ Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916), Chapter VII.

²⁸ Prescott F. Hall, 'The Recent History of Immigration and Immigration Restriction', *The Journal of Popular Economy*, Vol.21, No. 8 (October, 1913), 751. Hall concludes his piece by asking, 'In view of the earnest recommendations of the Immigration Commission, after four years of study costing a million dollars, is it about time to stop investigating and arguing, and to pass a law which will accomplish some real restriction along selective lines?'

²⁹ *Gazette and Bulletin* in Williamsport, Pennsylvania (18/1/13), 8.

³⁰ George Kibbe Turner, 'The Daughters of the Poor', *McClure's Magazine*, 34, (1909), 57-58. Turner distinguished from the native-born Western European Jews, but government reports made no such qualification, with the United States Immigration Committee Report in 1911 noting that 'There are a large number of Jews scattered throughout the United States who seduce and keep girls.' See Richard Maltby, 'The Social Evil, The Moral Order and The Melodramatic Imagination, 1890-1915', from *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen*, edited by Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook, and Christine Gledhill (London, BFI, 1994), 216. Social commentators and indeed films, such as *Traffic in Souls* (1913) recognised that the immigrant was, as Egal Feldman noted, 'the major casualty of commercialized vice.' See Egal Feldman, 'Prostitution, the Alien Woman and the Progressive Imagination, 1910-1915', *American Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No.2, Part 1 (Summer, 1967), 198.

³¹ Richard Maltby, 'The Social Evil, The Moral Order and The Melodramatic Imagination, 1890-1915', from *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen*, edited by Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook, and Christine Gledhill (London, BFI, 1994), 216.

³² The influx of foreign influences also threatened the existing racial and social order, with Hugh Brogan reporting the earlier lynching of five Italians in Louisiana in 1899 for associating on equal terms with African-Americans. See Hugh Brogan, *The Longman History of the United States of America* (Longman, 1985), 415.

³³ Joel Williamson, *A Rage for Order: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (Oxford, University Press, 1986), 244. Williamson's chapter 'The Paranoid style in the 20th Century South' considers the Southern perception that problems within their society came from outside forces. His chapter is useful when considering how the Klan created and presented outsiders (Jews, Catholics) undermining traditional 'Southern' values. I would argue that the Klan fosters this fear of the 'alien' infiltrating American society on a national level during the 1920s. Nancy MacLean, 'The Leo Frank Case Reconsidered: Gender and Sexual Politics in the Making of Reactionary Populism', *Journal of American History*, 78 (December 1991), 919, 929, 938. MacLean questions the popular presentation of the traditional South within this case. Throughout this period regionalism is a constructed notion that helps in the formation of a 'foreign' danger or threat. MacLean suggests that the chastity of Southern women (and in particular Phagan) was rarely questioned, and the manufactured belief (fuelled in part by *Birth*) that this society was one of pure womanhood and of clear class and gender boundaries, presented the Klan with a manufactured victim that it could defend. I will consider in chapter three how the active role of women within the Klan (and in films such as *Heart O' The Hills* and *The Cambric Mask*) inadvertently challenged the protective role of the Klan.

³⁴ Frank was lynched by a mob shortly after his trial. Williamson (1986), 238-47 retells the Frank case, showing the shift in enemy target. The story was reworked in the 1937 film *They Won't Forget*, although the convicted scapegoat was now not a Jew, but rather a Northern schoolteacher. Oscar Micheaux also based his 1921 film *The Gunsaulus Mystery* on the case, with the Jewish character replaced by an African-American.

³⁵ Thomas J. Schlereth, *Victorian America: Transformations in Everyday Life, 1876-1915* (Harper Perennial, 1992), 302.

³⁶ John Milton Cooper Jr., *Pivotal Decades: The United States, 1900-1920* (W.W. Norton & Co., 1990), 204. I will discuss the changing gender roles in greater depth in chapter three when considering Mary Pickford's appearance as a female night rider in *Heart O' The Hills* (1919).

³⁷ Wade (1987, p.144) briefly discusses the influence of the lynching of Leo Frank on the formation of a modern Klan. A fuller consideration appears in Nancy MacLean, 'The Leo Frank Case Reconsidered: Gender and Sexual Politics in the Making of Reactionary Populism', *Journal of American History*, 78 (December 1991). The quotes appear in MacLean pp. 920, 938, and she argues on p.946 that the Klan 'gained direct impetus from Watson's agitation in the Frank case.' David Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (Third Edition, New York, 1981), 70. Chalmers acknowledges the influence of Frank's lynching on the formation of a modern Klan, but notes that the Georgian Klan rarely targeted racial enemies during the 1920s.

³⁸ Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 12.

³⁹ *Decatur Review* (1/9/16), 22. This article appeared barely a month after the new Klan had formed, but throughout 1916 articles on *Birth* made no reference to any modern group.

⁴⁰ *Lincoln Daily Review* (24/3/16), 3. *The Sun Herald* (30/11/16). In both cases *Birth* was about to screen locally, with *Lincoln Daily Review* printing a large advert for the film alongside this report. During the 1920s *Birth* appeared closely linked to the modern Klan, but before 1920 *Birth* was rarely viewed in this context. This example does show an early attempt to generate publicity and interest in the film by presenting the film in a modern context.

⁴¹ A report in *The Coshocton Tribune* (21/11/17, p.3) reports that 'New Philadelphia "Y" fund workers have organised a Ku Klux Klan for intimidation of tightwad citizens.' *The Bismarck Tribune* (2/11/17, p.1) in North Dakota reports the emergence of a new group- the Liberty Bands- which 'recalls acts of [the] old Ku Klux Klan', whipping a pacifist preacher in Kentucky. *Birth* was screened in Bismarck two weeks later, with a review for the film now stating that 'The rides and rescues of the Ku Klux Klan so graphically, dramatically set forth in *The Birth of a Nation* are those of the original, right-enforcing organisation of the true sons of the old South.' *Bismarck Tribune* (13/11/17), 8. A modern Klan was not widely recognised by this stage, but as America entered the War, a number of independent vigilante groups emerged. *The Syracuse Herald* (11/11/1917) ran a headline 'Syracuse Clergyman warns against revival of spirit of Ku Klux Klan.' Once more there is no mention of Simmons' modern Klan, but rather of vigilante groups comparable to the earlier group. However, the reports in Alabama in 1918 do refer directly to the modern Klan. A headline in *The Indianapolis Star* (8/5/18) stated that 'Alabama Ku Klux warns idlers to get back to work.' The report explains that 'One hundred and fifty white robed men, in Ku Klux Klan uniform, carrying an American flag and a fiery cross at the head of the procession rode through the streets of Birmingham last night, warning idlers to find work.' A report of the Klan in Richmond, Virginia appears in *Evening State Journal* (30/7/19), 2. The report explains that one hundred and thirteen citizens 'fashioned after the historic Ku Klux Klan', banded together in a secret organisation. It is apparent from all of these reports that despite occasional vigilante action, a unified modern Klan was not recognised until 1920. The widely quoted statistic appears in MacLean (1994), 5.

⁴² Aldrich Blake, *The Ku Klux Kraze: a Lecture* (Oklahoma City, 1924). Blake was a staunch opponent of the Klan in Oklahoma, who had also written an early condemnation of the Klan in his article 'Story of Tulsa.' He questioned the motives behind the Klan, arguing that in Oklahoma and Indiana 'where the Klan strength has been greatest... the most relentless warfare has been waged against the minority groups.' Blake dissects the ethnic make-up of these areas and argues that 'so far as numbers are concerned' these groups (Catholics, Jews, African-Americans) could not be considered 'a serious menace. Therefore we must look elsewhere for the cause that first gave the Klan impetus.' Blake suggests that the reason for the Klan's success was 'purely psychological', discussing the group as a 'craze', but this fails to explain the reasons for the group's establishment. My research has suggested that Klan leaders were successful in these areas in presenting these minority groups as a controlling influence. I will show in chapter three how the Klan fostered itself as an underdog and as a minority group within American society. pp.4-5. See also p.17.

⁴³ 'Klan Utilizes Tradition of Old Southern order', *The Bridgeport Telegram*, (7/10/24), 2.

⁴⁴ 'American Legion Weekly Fair to Klan', *Dawn* (20/1/23). The paper qualifies this statement, explaining that the two groups stand for a 'spirit of toleration, justice and good will toward all inhabitants, regardless of color, creed or previous condition of servitude, but that the assimilation must be based upon American ideals, without mental reservations.'

⁴⁵ *Dawn*, (23/6/23), 18. Many of the conservative groups exploited by the Klan were religious, such as 'The committee on conservation and advance of the Methodist Episcopal Church'. According to a piece in *Dawn* (21/7/23, p.7) the committee sought to administer prohibition and maintain 'the supremacy of law in America.' 'It is pointed out by leaders of the Ku Klux Klan that these principles are similar to those of their organization.'

⁴⁶ Robert Goldberg, *Hooded Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado* (University of Illinois Press, 1981), 4. MacLean (1994, p.5) notes that 'within a few months' of Tyler and Clarke joining the Klan 'membership jumped to an estimated 100,000.'

⁴⁷ Goldberg (1981), 4.

⁴⁸ MacLean (1994), 5. Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City 1915-1930* (Oxford University Press, 1967), 10, 194.

⁴⁹ The letter written by J.M. McArthur, King Kleagle, Tennessee was sent on 24/5/21. It was reprinted in *New York World* (21/9/21, p.2) and was briefly mentioned in film papers including *Wid's Daily* (22/9/21) under the headline 'World Ties Fox Film with Ku Klux.' The letter also outlines the perceived value of the film to the group; 'This is a wonderful picture and while the Klan has nothing to do with it we realise its wonderful value to us from the fact that it portrays very vividly the conditions of today, and the Klan, mounted, is brought in at the climax, and believe me it is some climax.'

⁵⁰ 'Woods Accepts Chairmanship of Americanism Committee and Will Work Out Plan of Co-operation', *Moving Picture World* (11/12/20), 704. Dr A. T. Poffenger wrote in 1921 of the power film had to develop the 'spirit of true Americanism' and to promote a 'respect for law and social order.' He explained that 'its possible influence in the Americanisation of our foreign population through a medium which shall be intelligible to all, regardless of race is scarcely yet realised.' See Dr A. T. Poffenger, 'Motion Pictures and Crime' (1921), reprinted in *The Movies in our Midst: Documents in the Cultural History of Film in America*, ed. by Gerald Mast (University of Chicago Press, 1982), 202. An overview of the Americanism committee is offered by Craig Campbell, 'Peace, Prosperity and Sex' from *Reel America and World War I* (McFarland and Company, 1985).

⁵¹ Kevin Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence* (University of California Press, 1990), 444, 445. Ross (1998, 138-144) looks in more depth at these films, particularly *Bolshevism on Trial*.

⁵² The Klan emphasised their links with Presidents with *Kourier* (10/26, pp.6-7) comparing the Imperial Wizard, Dr Evans to Abraham Lincoln; 'Were there such a thing as reincarnation, it could surely be said Abraham Lincoln has come back to earth to finish his mission so rudely broken.' President Coolidge in his acceptance speech spoke of society and government failing unless 'America be kept American,' and *Kourier* ran a piece (4/25, p.28) entitled 'Said President Coolidge, So says the Klan' revealing the shared values of the two parties. Woodrow Wilson, as an old classmate of Thomas Dixon's, was widely reported to have endorsed *Birth* at a special screening in 1915, while his successor, the Republican President Harding, was often talked of as a Klan member after a special initiation ceremony in the White House.

⁵³ 'Fox's Production, "The Face at Your Window," Proves a Big Success Throughout Country', *Entertainment Trade Review* (27/11/20). Other prominent figures such as Samuel Gompers, the President of the American Federation of Labor also strongly supported the picture.

⁵⁴ *Variety* stated in 1920 that President Wilson was eager to attend a day of film screenings organised by the Legion. *Variety* (12/11/20), 34.

⁵⁵ *Moving Picture World* (25/12/20), 948.

⁵⁶ The reference comes from U.S.Congress, House Committee on Rules, *Hearings on the Ku Klux Klan*, 36. This is reported in Goldberg (1981), 14. The extended action scenes encouraged audiences to identify with the night-riders, although *Wid's Daily* (14/11/20, p.19) appeared less impressed, remarking somewhat flippantly that 'they must have had the horses out for exercise for they rode for fully five or six minutes and several times were seen coming over the same bridge.'

⁵⁷ *The News-Sentinel* (23/9/21), 5. The American Legion established a Film Service in 1921 in order to provide suitable pictures for local Legion posts. I will discuss the Legion's use of film in chapter four.

⁵⁸ 'Review of *The Face at your Window*', *Moving Picture World* (11/12/20), 769.

⁵⁹ The letter from William Simmons to William Fox was dated 22 April 1921 and sent from Atlanta, Georgia. The advert, along with the correspondence between Fox and the N.A.A.C.P. is in the *Records of the N.A.A.C.P.* at Library of Congress. Box I: C 312.

⁶⁰ 'Letter from the N.A.A.C.P. to William Fox' (30/8/21). 'Letter from Fox to the N.A.A.C.P.' (23/9/21). The N.A.A.C.P. letter suggests that it is problematic for Fox (and by extension the modern film industry) to present propaganda for the anti-Semitic Klan. Fox denies any connection with the Klan, explaining that 'This company has no connection whatever with William Joseph Simmons or any other person connected with the Ku Klux Klan, nor does it intend to make any affiliation with that organization or advocate or foster any propaganda or purposes of that organization.' The many fresh bookings of this film during 1921, including those instigated by Klan groups, suggest that the Fox company was aware (and benefited financially) from the new interest in this picture, even if they did not positively seek this market. The letters are contained in the *Records of the N.A.A.C.P.* at Library of Congress. Box I: C 312.

⁶¹ Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City 1915-1930* (Oxford University Press, 1967), 198. An advert for this event appeared in the *Sunday Oregonian* (18/12/21), 9. The lecture was delivered by Reverend R.H. Sawyer, a part timer pastor and popular Klan speaker. The speech was published as a pamphlet entitled 'The Truth about the invisible Empire Knights of the Ku Klux Klan' in 1922, and on the front cover of this pamphlet it states that the lecture was delivered on December 22nd to 'six thousand people.' *Searchlight* (7/1/22, p.4) reported that *The Ku Klux Klan Rides Again* was also shown after the lecture, with the *Sunday Oregonian* referring to this film as *The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan ride again*. It described the film program as 'eight reels of thrilling pictures, with a message of warning to American manhood and Womanhood.' There is no further information offered on *The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Rides Again*. The quote from *Portland News* appeared in the *Searchlight* article. Kathleen Blee stated that the first public meeting of the Klan in Franklin, Indiana in February 1923 featured a lecture by Daisy Barr (who would become the head of the WKKK) with 'an accompanying motion picture.' However, local reports explained that the films at the Artcraft theatre were in no way connected with the speech and the *Franklin Evening Star* reported on the day of the scheduled speech that 'due to a misunderstanding of engagements' the Klan meeting was called off. See Kathleen Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (University of California Press, 1991), 133. *Franklin Evening Star* (27/2/23, p.1), (28/2/23, p.6).

⁶² Robert Goldberg, *Hooded Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado* (University of Illinois Press, 1981), 14. An advert for the film appeared in *Denver Post* in July 1921, crediting the film's return to the Klan and offering free publicity.

⁶³ Goldberg (1981), 14.

⁶⁴ This description of Mary Pickford comes from the official publicity materials for *Heart O' The Hills*, which can be found in The Copyright Collection at Library of Congress.

⁶⁵ I am reluctant to imply that the growth of the Klan was due entirely to two individuals, but Clarke and Tyler helped to change the approach of the Klan, most notably in their emphasis on modern publicity methods.

⁶⁶ 'A letter from The Assistant Secretary of the N.A.A.C.P. to Albon L. Holsey, secretary to the Principal at Tuskegee' (11/2/21), from the *Records of the N.A.A.C.P.* at Library of Congress. Box I: C 312. Simmons' quotes are reported in Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism* (1965), 38. *Dearborn Independent* (5/11/21) also believed that the Klan benefited from these public attacks, writing that 'the Ku Klux Klan appears to have been made the recipient of a great deal of otherwise unpurchasable advertising as the result of someone's tactical blunder.'

⁶⁷ 'Hooded Klansmen Attend Picture Birth of a Nation', *Mexia Evening News* (10/1/22), 8. Robert Goldberg, *Hooded Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado* (University of Illinois Press, 1981), 153. Maxim Simcovitch, 'The Impact of Griffith's "Birth of a Nation" on the Modern Ku Klux Klan', *Journal of Popular Film*, 1:1 (1972: Winter), 51.

⁶⁸ MacLean (1994), 5. Alan Gevinson (ed.), *American Film Institute Catalogue. Within Our Gates: Ethnicity in American Feature Films, 1911-1960* (University of California Press, 1997),

95. See also 'Foes of Klan fight Birth of a Nation', *New York Times* (3/12/22), 5. Oscar Haywood became the treasurer and a leading figure in Cavalier Motion Picture Company in 1923. I will discuss Haywood and his involvement in this Klan film company in chapter four.

⁶⁹ 'Griffith is Challenged to Paint Ku Klux in True Colors; *Birth of a Nation* established Klan in U.S.', *Spotlight* (15/1/23), 3.

⁷⁰ MacLean (1994), 6. Fleener-Marzec (1980), 6. Alan Gevinson (ed.), *Within Our Gates*: (1997), 95. Gevinson lists the controversies surrounding the film during the 1920s, although these are considered in far more detail by Fleener-Marzec. Simcovitch (1972, p.49) reports the Richmond Klan No.1 and Robert E. Lee Klan No.4 'attending en masse a showing of *The Birth of a Nation*.' Luther I. Powell Klan in Portland Oregon also attended screenings of *Birth*. Simcovitch's references are taken from Jackson (1967).

⁷¹ 'Klan Refused Right to Exhibit Picture', *Ohio State Journal* (4/3/26), 3. In 1925 the Ohio Supreme Court had upheld a ban on the film, explaining that the film 'is not true to history, appeals to race prejudice and portrays scenes of crimes.' See *Ohio State Journal* (3/6/25), 1. See also Gevinson ed., *Within Our Gates* (1997), 95. "'Birth of a Nation" To Be Shown for Church Benefit', *Searchlight* (18/10/24), 1, 5. *Searchlight* (25/10/24), 4.

⁷² *Searchlight* (28/1/22), 8. 'Local Klansmen Attend Theatre', *The Bee*, Danville (13/9/23), 11. 'Living Klansmen Add Big Thrill at Exhibit of "Birth of a Nation"', *Searchlight* (25/2/22), 7.

⁷³ *Fiery Cross* (10/8/23). *New York World* (5/12/22). 'Griffith's "Birth of a Nation" Remains "The Daddy of 'em All"', *Variety* (8/12/22). The article reported that this continued until the gathering 'seemed finally to realise that the Klan the picture was telling of had no connection with the organisation of today.' Reviews often sought to distance the earlier model of the Klan, still held with a high level of romanticism after *Birth*, from its modern counterpart.

⁷⁴ *Moving Picture World* (17/5/24), 297.

⁷⁵ *Records of the N.A.A.C.P.* at Library of Congress. Box I: C 301. Fleener-Marzec (1980), 188-9, 209 n.74. See also *New York Times* (7/5/21, 9/5/21) and *New York Times Review* (17/5/21). The arrests were based on a law that 'forbade the distribution of commercial or business advertising material in public places.' The N.A.A.C.P. fought hard against this with their secretary James Weldon Johnson indicating that the purpose of the demonstration was 'to register a peaceable protest against what is plainly propaganda for the KKK in New York City.' Fleener-Marzec (1980), 189. Judge Alfred Talley ruled in their favour in November 1921, explaining that the ordinance was designed to prevent littering of advertising material. See also Gevinson ed., *Within Our Gates* (1997), 95.

⁷⁶ The pamphlet is dated 2/2/15 and is discussed in Fleener-Marzec (1980), 251. Fleener-Marzec (1980), 244. *Photoplay* (June 1922, p.48) included a report from *Columbia*, the official magazine of The Knights of Columbus warning that 'Motion Pictures will go the way of the saloon unless they reform or are reformed.' I will show in the next chapter how the Klan and Catholic groups often appeared to share the same views on censorship and reform, even though they presented themselves in direct opposition to one another. 'Despite 16 Weeks Played Once, 'Birth' Barred in Riot Charge', *Variety* (20/5/21), 47. Boston was an area with a large Catholic population.

⁷⁷ 'Letter from N.A.A.C.P. to Mrs Evelyn F. Snow Chief, Division of Film Censorship, Columbus Ohio' dated 12/7/21, from *Records of the N.A.A.C.P.* at Library of Congress. The N.A.A.C.P. also encloses a copy of the leaflet distributed in New York when protesting against *Birth*. The N.A.A.C.P. is not simply concerned with the content of the film, but more specifically with the extreme reactions and racial tensions provoked from screenings of *Birth*.

⁷⁸ 'Letter from N.A.A.C.P. to Globe Newspaper' dated 15/8/22 from *Records of the N.A.A.C.P.* at Library of Congress. The Assistant Secretary quoted the example of the Atlanta riots of 1906, which 'were traced almost directly to a long run of the Klansman in that town. I was living in Atlanta at the time and I know whereof I speak.' John Inscoe, 'The Clansman on Stage and Screen: North Carolina Reacts', *North Carolina Historical Review*, Volume LXIV, Number 2, April 1987, considers the extreme reaction to the play in North Carolina. The N.A.A.C.P. refers to 'other such plays and films' that glorify the Klan, suggesting (quite rightly) that the representation of the Klan on stage and screen stretched beyond *Birth*.

⁷⁹ The censorship history of all of these films is discussed in greater detail in chapter four. *The Knight of the Eucharist* was resubmitted in 1923 as *The Mask of the Ku Klux Klan*. I found one

internet reference to N.A.A.C.P. protests against the 1923 Our Gang comedy *Lodge Night*, which depicted a children's Klan group called the Cluck Cluck Klams. This may suggest that *Birth* also alerted the N.A.A.C.P. to the power of film as propaganda for the Klan, but I found no other references to any protests within the N.A.A.C.P. files or elsewhere. See <http://www.geocities.com/timmlimm/clan.htm> (accessed 30/5/06).

⁸⁰ Gerald R. Butters, Jr., 'The Birth of a Nation and the Kansas Board of Review of Motion Pictures: A Censorship Struggle' from *Kansas History* 14 (No.1, Spring 1991), 2-14.

⁸¹ *Variety* (23/9/21), 37. According to the article 'the Detroit police commissioner and the mayor give as their reason [for the ban], the present adverse agitation.' 'Ku Klux Klan Exposé hits 'Birth of a Nation's Tour', *Variety* (23/9/21), 45. The film played to large numbers in St Louis and New Orleans, but was held up in San Francisco 'because Negroes object.' The report states that advertising agents 'have been instructed to avoid any connection between the present K.K.K. and their production', but exhibitors often used the topical interest in the Klan to sell pictures (even those that did not refer to the Klan), as I will discuss in chapter three.

⁸² Fleener-Marzec (1980), 139-141. *Variety* (21/2/1924). See also *Chicago Daily News* (12/2/24, p.12) which reports that 'hundreds of Klansmen were in attendance' and Simcovitch (1972), 51.

⁸³ *Searchlight* (7/1/22), 4.

⁸⁴ *The Birth of a Nation* presents and firmly establishes a vision of the Civil War and Reconstruction built up since the 1880s when the South, coming to terms with defeat, created a popular memory of the 'Lost Cause' to justify its defeat. During the 1880s the loss that had dominated Southern memory since the end of the War gave way to a 'greater celebration of the Confederacy', and *Birth*, released at the fiftieth anniversary of the Confederate defeat, is the culmination of this celebration. In 1883 a memorial to Robert Lee had featured the Confederate General sleeping as if dead, yet in Richmond in 1890, a crowd of 150,000 (fifteen times greater than in 1883) witnessed the unveiling of a new heroic statue of Lee. By 1900, Lee's birthday, like that of Jefferson Davis, was celebrated in southern towns as an official holiday. Societies also emerged, popularising the past, so that by the turn of the century The United Daughters of the Confederacy had 100,000 members and in 1893 a Confederates veterans' journal was established to represent the huge number of groups now in existence. The monuments and memorials served to present an idealised vision of the Old South, which became popular at a time of vulnerability and perceived change to Southern society.

⁸⁵ Robert Lang (ed.), *The Birth of a Nation* (Rutgers University Press, 1994), 171

⁸⁶ Evelyn Ehrlich suggests that this reconciliation theme is 'the central motif of the Civil War play.' Yet, she argues that in early film (pre-1910) this is presented from the perspective of the Union, with the country united on Northern terms. Evelyn Ehrlich, 'The Civil War in Early Film: Origin and Development of a Genre' from *The Southern Quarterly* Vol. 19, Nos.3-4, 70-82.

⁸⁷ Roy E. Aitken, *The Birth of a Nation Story* (Delinger, 1965), 35. When Griffith discussed the importance of the Klan scenes, Thomas Dixon is reported to have said 'Ah, the Klan... It was the Klan that saved the South.' Thomas Cripps, 'Negroes in Movies', from *Negro American Literature Forum, Volume 2.1* (1968), p.7. *New York Times* (2/1/16). These figures are also quoted in Bruce Chadwick, *The Reel Civil War: Mythmaking in American Film* (New York, 2001), 132. Seymour Stern, 'The Birth of a Nation in Retrospect', *International Photographer* VII (April, 1935), 4.

⁸⁸ Jane M. Gaines, *Fire and Desire: Mixed Race Movies in the Silent Era* (University of Chicago Press, 2001), 224. Chadwick (2001), 132. Charles Arthur Perry, 'The Attitude of High School Students toward Motion Pictures' published in *The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures* (1923), 36. The survey also notes that 'While the girls of the South place two pictures higher than *The Birth of a Nation*, this picture received a materially larger portion of the girls' vote in the South than in any other section.'

⁸⁹ *The New York Times* (5/12/22), 24:3. 'Griffith's "Birth of a Nation" Remains "The Daddy of 'em All"', *Variety*, (8/12/22). *Wichita Daily Times* (22/1/22), 2:5.

⁹⁰ Mark Calney, 'D.W. Griffith and "The Birth of a Monster": How the Confederacy Revived the KKK and Created Hollywood', *The American Almanac* (11/1/93). Maxim Simcovitch (1972, p.49) also notes that 'whereas, in the late-teens, the modern Klan was only a regional, Southern organisation, during the twenties it advanced in force into the North and Middle

West.” Simcovitch suggests that during the 1920s ‘the Klan recognized the advertising value of revived presentations of *The Birth of a Nation* “as part of Klan propaganda” on a national rather than regional level.’ The national popularity of this film was apparent from 1915, but there is little evidence of *Birth* being presented in relation to a modern Klan until Tyler and Clarke joined the organisation in 1920.

⁹¹ Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900-1942* (Oxford University Press, 1977), 61. Taken from “Letter from Thomas Dixon to Woodrow Wilson” (5/9/15), *Wilson papers*, VI, 485. Both quotes can be found in John Hope Franklin, ‘Birth of a Nation- Propaganda as History’, *The Massachusetts Review* (Autumn, 1979), 431.

⁹² Patrick Gerster and Nicholas Cords (eds.), *Myth and Southern History, Volume 2: The New South* (University of Illinois Press, 1989), 56. This move towards a national myth was also influenced by America’s imperialistic ambitions and had been gradually building up since the turn of the century. In 1900 a nationwide group had elected Robert E. Lee to the American Hall of Fame. One historian referred to his acceptance as a national symbol as a ‘transition which almost entailed his capture from the South.’ Gaines M. Foster recognised that Confederate groups became ‘increasingly middle class’, changing the lyrics of Dixie in 1903 so that they were now in the ‘language of a refined and gallant people.’ Robert Armour argued that this southern image of ‘happiness based on an agrarian lifestyle and a social structure dominated both by tradition and by white aristocrats’ had long been established in literature, but Griffith was now able to extend this myth through film.

⁹³ Wade (1987), 138-9. Reviews emphasised the image of the Klan within *Birth* with *The New York Times* (4/3/15) writing that the Klan ‘look like a company of avenging spectral crusaders sweeping along the moonlight roads.’ Robyn Wiegman also highlighted the importance of the film (and film as a medium) in creating distinctive imagery, when noting that in *The Birth of a Nation* ‘the nineteenth-century image of the African American as rapist turns to pure spectacle.’ See Robyn Wiegman, ‘Race, Ethnicity and Film’ from *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies* (1998), 162.

⁹⁴ D.W.Griffith, *The Man who Invented Hollywood; The Autobiography of D. W. Griffith* (Touchstone Publishing, 1972), 88. The Klan within *The Rose of Kentucky* is not motivated by race. The scenes of the night riders appear almost as a test-reel for *Birth*, although Griffith does not yet use tracking shots while the Klan ride.

⁹⁵ *The Bridgeport Telegram* (7/10/24), 2. Two articles, ‘Klan utilizes tradition of old Southern order’ and ‘Griffith regrets possibility of picture having inspired Klan’ appear under the broader heading ‘Picturesque Ku-Klux-Klan rituals based upon fiction under the guise of tradition.’ Simcovitch (1972), 52. *The Bridgeport Telegram* suggests that ‘the Fiery Cross appears for the first time in connection with the Klan some forty years after its dissolution.’

⁹⁶ Inscoe refers in particular to North Carolina and Klan histories certainly offer evidence of extreme racism across the country after screenings. For example Wade (p.138) quotes a viewer who remarked after watching *Birth*, that ‘it makes me want to go out and kill the first Negro I see.’ John Inscoe, ‘The Clansman on Stage and Screen: North Carolina Reacts’, *North Carolina Historical Review*, Volume LXIV, Number 2, (April, 1987).

⁹⁷ John Inscoe, *North Carolina Historical Review*, (1987), 161.

⁹⁸ Joan Silverman, ‘The Birth of a Nation: Prohibition Propaganda’ from *The South and Film*, edited by Warren French (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1981), 29.

⁹⁹ ‘Griffith Regrets Possibility of Picture Having Inspired Klan’, *The Bridgeport Telegram* (7/10/24), 2.

¹⁰⁰ Roy E. Aitken, *The Birth of a Nation Story* (Delinger, 1965), 61.

¹⁰¹ *The Bridgeport Telegram* (7/10/24), 2.

¹⁰² ‘Griffith is Challenged to Paint Ku Klux in True Colors; Birth of a Nation Established Klan in U.S.’, *Spotlight* (15/1/23), 3. *Dawn* (13/10/23), 10. The Klan paper *Searchlight* (7/10/22) criticised Griffith’s heroic depiction of Danton, a famous character of the French Revolution, in *Orphans of the Storm*. Without a hint of irony, *Searchlight* suggested that ‘if he [Griffith] is going to make a practice of portraying historical events, he had better go back to school again.’ Griffith is not entirely vilified by the Klan, with *Imperial Night Hawk* (22/8/23, p.4) suggesting that Griffith would be approached to direct *Armageddon*, a modern day Klan sponsored film.

The film was intended as a response to Dixon's *The Traitor*, and I will briefly consider these films in chapter four.

¹⁰³ 'Klan is Denounced by the Klansman', *New York Times* (23/1/23), 23. 'Author of The Clansman Scores K.K.K.', *Fitchburg Sentinel* (23/1/23), 1. Dixon was asked to speak in New York by the American Unity League 'to discuss ways and means for combating the hooded organization.' The speech is widely reported, for example in *Syracuse Herald* (23/1/23, p.1), *Sheboygan Press Telegram* (23/1/23) in Wisconsin and *The Landmark* (25/1/23, p.6.) in Statesville, North Carolina, which ran the headline 'Dixon spits on Ku Klux.' The earlier speech is reported in *Lincoln State Journal*, 'Dixon Opposes Ku Klux' (13/1/23). The article also reveals Dixon's 'resentment at the use of his name by a Baltimore branch of the organisation.' See also Raymond A. Cook, *Thomas Dixon* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1974). Dixon criticises the lawless acts of the 'renegade Klan' (p.65) believing that the original group was 'a desperate remedy evoked in a desperate crisis.'

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Dixon, *The Black Hood* (Appleton and Co., 1924), 336. Dixon warns against the use of the Klan in modern times- 'It is a disguise of an insane crime-ridden era' (p.84), fearing that the group will be used to avenge personal grievances. Dixon also attacks the racial ideals of the modern group, writing of 'the raider's twisted, knotted features, pockmarked and red with liquor; the Jew's fine Christlike face in startling contrast to the beast beside him.' (p.163.) The modern Klan within the book is the victim of drunken powers, as in many of the westerns that I will consider in chapter three. The criticisms of Dixon come from *Imperial Night Hawk*, 'Peddling stock for Anti-Klan picture' (25/4/23), 4. Anthony Slide, *American Racist: The Life and Films of Thomas Dixon* (The University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 172-3. An updated version of *The Traitor* was made in 1937 as *Nation Aflame*. I will consider this in chapter five.

¹⁰⁵ 'Let the Klan Die', *The New York Times* (20/11/23), 18.

¹⁰⁶ John Moffatt Mecklin, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind* (New York, 1924), 12. *New York World* exposé began on 6/9/21 and for the next three weeks there were stories about the Klan every day. The paper listed 152 separate outrages attributed to the Klan on 19/9/21. See also Jackson (1967), 11-13. U.S. Congress. House Committee on Rules, Ku Klux Klan Hearings, October 11-17, 1921, 67th Congress, First Session (Washington, 1921).

¹⁰⁷ *New York Times* (23/1/23), 23. See also Cook, *Thomas Dixon* (1974), 63-65.

¹⁰⁸ 'Chicago Citizens See Rabid Discrimination in Negro, Catholic Ban on "Birth of a Nation",' *Dawn* (9/2/24), 10-11.

Chapter Two:

Klan Protests: the Klan and the film industry in confrontation

A patent infringement suit for \$113,500 has been filed here [Atlanta] by attorneys for the Ku Klux Klan against Warners and Vitagraph for alleged use of the Klan's patented insignia in the film, "The Black Legion".¹

This modest report, hidden on the inside page of *Hollywood Reporter* in August 1937, marked the complete breakdown of relations between the Klan and the film industry, as the secret organisation felt the need publicly to sue Warner Brothers, a high profile Hollywood company. The case was ostensibly concerned with film representation, and more specifically with the representation of the Klan on screen, yet as I will show, this case was symptomatic of a long running dispute between the racist right wing traditional values of the Klan and the perceived wild modern decadence of the film industry, regarded by the Klan as a predominantly Jewish institution. It was the latest in a series of disputes, running back to the early twenties, when the Klan had used the film industry as a public antithesis to attack and define itself against.

Variety explained the legal dispute in slightly more depth, under the unlikely heading 'Kluxers sue WB on 'Black Legion' Insignia.' In this report it explained that a petition had been filed in the name of the KKK, asking for \$250 for each time the picture had been shown. A further \$100,000 was requested in 'damages,' *Variety* spoke of 'this legal move on [the] part of [the] bed sheet boys,' with the Klan also objecting to the line within the film, 'are we in for another reign of terror by a new Ku Klux Klan?'² The press discussed this case largely in terms of the Klan, and Warner Bros. similarly appeared far less interested in the claim than in the claimant. Morris Ebenstein, overseeing the case for Warners, wrote that 'I need hardly say that it is both funny and

sad to think that an organisation like the Ku Klux Klan has legal rights and a standing in court.' The Klan and the film industry had historically stood in opposition, and by 1937 Warner Bros. initially intended to defend itself, not over the intricacies of the patent laws, but rather by attacking the Klan as a group.³ Ebenstein wrote to Roy Obringer, a colleague at Warners on 27 August 1937 explaining that 'We [Warners] will of course claim that it [the Klan] is an illegal organization and has no rights to ascertain a claim, but it may not be easy to prove this.' Warners also corresponded with Capt. Ramsay, a staunch opponent of the Klan, who claimed that he had evidence of Klan raids, as it looked to expose this long-held foe.⁴

Ebenstein admitted that initially he was 'not taking (the case) too seriously.' He wrote of the action as a 'nice legal question,' one that 'I am inclined to think that we will win.' It may seem strange that the Klan was willing to sue publicly a Hollywood company in a case that it appeared likely to lose, yet for the Klan this case was about much more than the use of its patented insignia. The image of the Klan had been used without authorisation many times before without any legal action, and although *Black Legion* now offered a negative depiction of the group, this legal dispute once more offered the Klan publicity and allowed it to promote and redefine its image to the public. Throughout the 1920s the Klan had publicly presented itself in opposition to a film industry that it frequently depicted as Jewish controlled. I suggested in the previous chapter that when the Klan contested the bannings of *Birth*, it promoted its own religious values by presenting the censorship as an attack on Protestantism. *Birth* was a battleground over which the Klan and its predominantly Jewish and Catholic opponents discussed the broader issues of social order and race. However, during the 1920s these ideological disputes stretched beyond *Birth* and beyond Klan representation, with the Klan positioning itself publicly against its Jewish and Catholic opponents, through its

criticisms and protests against individual films, 'Hollywood' and the cinema as a social space.

Race, religion and national identity: Cinema exhibition and modernity

The official Klan newspaper *Kourier* urged its readers in 1925 to 'not suppose that all of the happiness and all of the intelligence has been monopolized by the present movie-airplane-automobile-jazz generation. There were joys untold in those old covered wagon days.' The piece spoke fondly of the 'good old days,' that 'great and glorious time,' and recalled the 'transparent honesty' and 'whole hearted hospitality' of the covered wagon days. The article presented the traditional values of the Klan in opposition to a modernity exemplified by film, jazz and modern transportation technologies.⁵ Throughout the 1920s the Klan strongly criticised cinema exhibition, film and Hollywood, but these attacks were closely connected to issues of immigration, race, religion and national identity. The Klan did not oppose modernity as such, but, rather, presented the social transformations associated with modernity as a direct product of the Jewish and Catholic influences within America.

The sociologist Guy B. Johnson considered the growth of the Klan in an article published in 1923. He presented the Klan as 'a reaction to modernism' but also recognised that this was closely aligned to a perceived 'loss of control by the church.' Johnson argued that 'the rather sudden rise of the movie, the automobile, and the modern dance has left the church on the defensive in regard to its control of the younger generation.'⁶ *Kourier* supported this argument and suggested in 1925 that 'most of those who should hover about the hearthstone of home can now be found on the roadside, or lakeside, in the theatres or some amusement resort.'⁷ The Klan objected to the cinema building as a social, and more specifically sexual space for young men and women.

Kathleen Blee, a historian of the Klan, stated that ‘in town after town in Indiana the Klan tried to make a public issue of dance halls and other “vile places of amusement”.’ She cited the example of the Hammond Klan, who announced that they would monitor all picture shows and other places of amusement, after receiving complaints about ‘impassioned “love grips” in the “cheaper movie houses” of the town.’ Blee also suggested that the Klan’s objections to the cinema as a social space were fuelled by the group’s anti-Semitic attitudes:

The Klan implied and sometimes openly declared that Jews benefited financially from places of amusement and thus were responsible for the “misuse of girls” and “promiscuous petting” that these places encouraged among the young.⁸

Henry Goldschmidt in his introduction to *Race, Nation and Religion in the Americas* noted that ‘much like scholars and theorists of modernity, scholars of collective identity have generally paid scant attention to religion.’⁹ For the Klan, an opposition to modernity, and more specifically cinema, would appear to be defined to a large extent by religious attitudes as it was the Klan’s anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic prejudices that appear most prominently in film discourses. When the Klan criticised the cinema as an exhibition space, its critique was often based on perceived shifts in the religious order of society.¹⁰ Bishop Alma White, a staunch Klan supporter, complained in her 1925 book *The Ku Klux Klan in Prophecy*, that ‘in many states the Jews are running the theatres and the motion picture shows on Sunday, thus undermining Christianity by luring the multitudes away from the Protestant churches into these vile places of amusement.’¹¹ The Klan presented the cinema in competition and opposition to the Protestant church. The Klan paper, *Imperial Night-Hawk*, reported children stealing money in order to visit their local cinema. The morals of children were

corrupted not only by the images on screen but also by the very process of visiting the cinema. Again this problem was credited more broadly to the 'commercialised motion picture industry,' which the paper labelled as 'a promoter of crime, a wrecker of religion and a destroyer of civilization.'¹²

The Klan's criticisms of the cinema as a social space was predominantly concerned with the perceived Jewish control of film exhibition, with Klan discourse presenting itself in direct confrontation with the Jewish exhibitors.¹³ The Klan's attitude was clearly expressed by the Reverend Oscar Haywood, a leading Klan lecturer who delivered a series of talks during the summer of 1923. Haywood, in his capacity as the treasurer of the Klan film company, Cavalier Motion Pictures, broadly outlined the Klan's attitude towards film and film exhibition. His comments were reported in *Kokomo Daily Dispatch*:

He [Haywood] said that he did not urge Klansmen to stay away from the motion picture houses, nor did he wish to be understood as expressly criticizing any local theater manager. He wished to be understood as criticizing the motion pictures as an industry, which he said was 90% owned by Jews.¹⁴

Haywood's comments served to justify the Klan's own use of film, and once again showed the Klan objecting to film and the cinema on an institutional level. Even when the Klan targeted individual picture houses, its objections were often more broadly aimed at 'the Jews' rather than at specific individuals. For example, the Klan complained in one town that it couldn't deliver a lecture because 'it is impossible to rent a hall on account of the influence of the Jews.'¹⁵ On occasion, local Klan groups did object to individual exhibitors, but again these exhibitors were defined by their religion. The official monthly bulletin of the Klan in Mississippi complained strongly against the

'indecent movement and nudity' presented by an 'un-Christian Jew manager,' while in Ohio, the Klan instigated a boycott of the Lyceum Theatre in Canton after it was taken over by Sam Bernstein, a Jewish entrepreneur from New York City. Klan pressure forced Bernstein to close his theatre on Sundays, and *Moving Picture World* reported that the 'Ku Klux Klan is endeavouring to force Bernstein out of his business' as members of the Klan also attempted to buy the theatre.¹⁶

The Klan criticised the cinema building and in particular the Jewish control of film exhibition in religious terms ('un-Christian manager'), but the Klan's criticisms of modernity and the cinema were also based on issues of race and national identity. The Klan presented the cinema building as 'Un-American' and foreign, and as a product of increased immigration:

The site of the first public library in America is now a theatre; the laboratory of S. F. B. Morse, is an Italian movie [theatre]. Both sites are in Boston. Are these facts an indication of our progress? Does America care more for entertainment than for culture, which is represented by a public library or a scientist's laboratory?¹⁷

Kourier used an example within Boston, a cosmopolitan city with a large Catholic population and presented the cinema building as a foreign influence (in this case Italian) that undermined the traditional educative 'culture' of the country.¹⁸ When criticising cinema as a social exhibition space, the Klan highlighted that the cinema mixed races, nationalities and religions, as film theatres housed immigrants from all nations.¹⁹ Steven Ross has presented silent film as an assimilationist tool, breaking down language barriers with 'a dozen different nationalities being represented in the audience.'²⁰ For the Klan, the cinema created what Ben Singer refers to as 'cultural

discontinuity,' by moving women and children into a threatening inter-ethnic public space.²¹

The Klan justified its own use of modern technology by presenting it as racially pure, as American and as Protestant. For example, the Klan-made picture *The Traitor Within* was advertised in Indiana as 'a picture that every red blooded American should see.'²² When the Klan supported the establishment of a radio station set up by the 'Fellowship Forum' in 1928, it explained that this station was built by 'Protestant money for broadcasting Protestant and fraternal messages throughout the country.'²³ Furthermore, when the Klan newspaper *Dawn* in 1923 showed a heavily decorated car, with KKK written along the side, it described the car as 'A vehicle of 100% Americanism.' The article asserted that the car was seen as a 'sense of the character and devotion of one hundred percent Americans.'²⁴

The Klan thus defined its opponents within its criticisms of modernity, not only in terms of religion (as Jewish and Catholic), but also racially and in terms of national identity. As an example, *The American Standard*, a Klan- supported publication from New York, complained in 1925 that 'the 15,000 motion picture theatres in the United States are nearly all owned by Jews and Roman Catholics. Many of these exhibitors were formerly gamblers, pawnbrokers, peddlers, or keepers of unsavory resorts.' The article emphasised the moral influence these exhibitors exercised over society and suggested that there were social customs and values inherent in each Jewish person. The article argued that Jewish exhibitors 'have the same instincts and characteristics as the morally lawless Jews, who have acquired control of the bootlegging traffic, and who are to-day attempting to carry it on in defiance of our constitution.'²⁵ Klan discourse suggested that Jews could be categorised racially if not by colour then by 'inherent characteristics', 'ethnological differences' and also by blood.²⁶ The racial construction of 'the Jew' did not completely overlook issues of colour though, as the 'whiteness' of

'the Jew' was important in the Klan's construction of the Jewish threat. Eugene Levy, in his article 'Is the Jew a White man?' suggested that in the case of Leo Frank, the Jewish factory owner who was convicted of raping and murdering a young white girl, his lawyers sought to position and assimilate Frank as a white man against the testimony of the black suspect, Jim Conley.²⁷ Sander Gilman's work also highlighted the ways in which Jewish people were able to be configured as white, yet for the Klan, 'the Jew,' foreign-born and with different beliefs, represented a transgressive, destabilising white identity.²⁸ After the Red Scare of 1919, the 'Bolshevik Jew' was presented as 'the enemy within,' physically barely distinguishable from the Protestant American, and, as a result of this, a greater threat within a clearly defined racial society.

The Klan understood modernity, defined its opponents and also defined its own identity through religion (as a Protestant or gentile group), race (as 'white' and 'red blooded'), and nation ('100% American' and 'native born'). These categories are inter-related, so that the Klan's concept of nationality for example is characterised by religious and racial qualifications. A Jewish man may legally be classed as an American but he would not fit within the Klan's criteria as a '100% American.' Similarly a Catholic person is not simply defined by their religion, but by their nationality, as foreign and more specifically 'Roman.' A report within the Klan press on the anti-Catholic book *Convent Cruelties* stated that 'Protestant readers will be horrified by Mrs. Jackson's revelations' and a further advert warned 'Americans Beware.'²⁹ The Klan manipulated these inter-linked categories, so that it might prioritise terms such as 'white' when defining itself against African Americans, or 'Protestant' when dealing with 'Jewish' influences. The Klan interchanged and merged these terms. For example, the Klan newspaper *Dawn* defined the Klansmen as an 'American of white, gentile, native stock.' Henry Goldschmidt argued that one cannot distinguish 'race, nation or religion per se.' I would argue that the Klan's Protestant values were most pronounced

within its criticisms of, and writings about, cinema, but it is apparent that terms that may apply to religion (for example 'Jewish'), race ('red blooded'), or nation ('100% American') often represented a broader ideology encompassing religion, race and national identity together.³⁰

There is a tendency, due in part to the extreme reactions generated by *Birth*, to view the Klan of the 1920s purely in relation to race, but, as I have suggested, the Klan press regularly emphasised the 'Un-Christian Jews' and the 'anti-Christian Jews' operating within the film industry. When the Klan reminisced about 'those old Covered Wagon days,' it remembered 'days of deep religion,' fondly recalling the 'valor of our Protestant forefathers, who blazed the trail for us.'³¹ The numerous stories of lynchings indicate the anti-African American hostility often evident within the modern Klan, but *Dawn* suggested in 1923 that 'the typical Klansman is the best friend the GOOD Negro can have.' The 'Good' Negro was defined in religious terms, with *Dawn* stating that while it was 'completely committed to the maintenance of a God-given white supremacy' it recognised distinctions within this racial category based on religion. The article reported white congregations helping Baptist churches, and in order to understand the Klan's criticisms of film, it is essential to recognise the importance of religion to the group.³²

The Klan was a staunchly Protestant organisation, using church meetings, sermons and Protestant leaders to spread its message, and displaying placards saying 'Join a church,' 'Jesus is our leader' and 'We stand for a Christian Religion.' Every week in Klan papers, there would be a section entitled 'Go to Church Sunday' with a list of local churches, while the group constantly presented itself as administrators of God's work on earth.³³ Rev. James Hardin Smith offered a sermon in St Louis, reprinted in *Dawn* in 1922, asking what Jesus would think of the Klan:

I am told they are bad because they wear robes. Not necessarily. Men may disguise themselves and go on missions of mercy and kindness. I think Jesus would have worn a robe such as they use, but because He did not wear a robe the mob came and took Him and crucified Him.³⁴

The suggestion that Jesus firstly may have joined the Klan and secondly may not have been crucified if he had, may appear fanciful, but the Klan constantly used religion to justify its cause. Provocative headings like 'Protestant church in danger: Klan only hope says Pastor' would appear in Klan publications, as the group presented itself as the defenders of the Protestant faith.³⁵ This is particularly significant for the Klan's debates over film, as the group not only attacked the Jewish control of film exhibition, but also protested against the presentation of the Klan's religious beliefs on screen. From 1923, the Klan launched a series of virulent attacks against on screen images, as the group once more used widespread, popular concerns to promote its own position. These protests began in April 1923 with the release of the Charlie Chaplin film, *The Pilgrim*.

Protecting Protestantism, Censoring Charlie

A vulgar little ape of the screen at present is busily pocketing dollars as a reward for caricaturing the Protestant ministry. In ministerial garb the guttersnipe comedian drinks booze, waves a pistol and in general behaves like a moron.³⁶

The figure of Charlie Chaplin in the 1923 film *The Pilgrim* received heavy protests from Klan groups throughout the country. In South Carolina, the screening of the film was stopped on April 28 on the grounds that the picture 'ridiculed the Protestant ministry' after complaints from the Daniel Morgan chapter of the Klan. The

film was banned in areas of Pennsylvania and Kansas, while *Imperial Night Hawk* proudly reported that the Wellsberg Klan number 40, based in West Virginia, had also 'filed a successful protest.'³⁷

Moving Picture World reported this incident under the heading 'Klan Now Censoring,' explaining that the manager of the Strand Theatre had shown the film to satisfied clergy, but had decided to stop the showing in order to 'avoid a local squabble.'³⁸ Almost a quarter of the film was cut in Mason City, Iowa, after complaints from 'the Protestant Preachers' association and a man who said he was a representative of the Ku Klux Klan,' while the Klan in Pittsburgh claimed triumphantly that 'The Pilgrim has been driven off the screen in several states by the Klan.'³⁹ Leila N. Hollin, an exhibitor at the Colonial Theatre in Lebanon, Indiana, recognised the animosity felt towards the film in an area with a strong Klan presence. She wrote of the picture in *Moving Picture World*: 'Awfully silly and not one-half as many laughs as a two reel inexpensive comedy which we used two days before. Besides, it invites ill-will of our good townspeople, who objected to it being run.'⁴⁰

Searchlight had published a letter at the start of 1923 alerting readers to Chaplin's forthcoming appearance as a clergyman in *The Pilgrim*. The writer outlined his concerns about the misrepresentation of Protestantism on screen, and blamed this misrepresentation on the fact that 'the movies are controlled by the Jews and Catholics.' A week later an article appeared in *Searchlight* reiterating these arguments and, over the next few months, Klan newspapers were filled with editorials against the film and with reports of successful protests.⁴¹ The protests against *The Pilgrim* occurred throughout the country and appeared concerned with the representation of Protestantism. *Dawn* complained that the film 'ridiculed the memory of America's founders and the Protestant ministry of the present day.' *Imperial Night-Hawk* offered a headline 'Screen Ridicule of Protestant Ministry,' writing in a separate piece that 'Klans in all sections of

the country have been active recently in protesting against motion pictures which are either lewd and lascivious or which ridicule religion and the Protestant ministry.' The Pittsburgh Klan wrote to *Movie Weekly* in July 1923 complaining about the 'bigoted, sacrilegious, untrue and disgraceful portrayal of the Protestant Church as is shown in *The Pilgrim*.' Klan groups appeared to respond to the negative presentation not simply of its own groups, but rather of its values, as, by attacking its ideals, the industry was seen to undermine the organisation.⁴²

These protests against screenings of *The Pilgrim* show the Klan as an active player, engaging in debates regarding film. The issue of representation was important for the Klan from a propagandist perspective, yet it also brought out these broader disputes between the Klan and those it perceived as opponents. It served as a pretext to attack the perceived Jewish control of the industry, with the Klan placing the blame for *The Pilgrim* on the Jewish producers. *Imperial Night Hawk* used the furore over *The Pilgrim* to ask:

Why is it that the Jewish producers of our movies always see to it when a comic or an erring parson is needed that such parson is always depicted as Protestant? Did you ever see a comic, drunken or immoral priest or a criminal Jewish rabbi pictured in a film? Not on your life. All screen priests are self-sacrificing, gentle and good. All screen rabbis are benign, learned and holy.⁴³

The Fiery Cross offered an explanation for the different representations of religious figures, when discussing the banning of *The Pilgrim* in Spartansberg, South Carolina. The paper explained that 'the Jewish control of the movie industry and the highly organized Catholic pressure, which is so quickly and readily bought to bear have barred any fun-making at the expense of the clergy of their respective beliefs.' In an

earlier article the paper commented that Chaplin 'should be hilariously funny to the Jews and Catholics whose capital controls this form of amusement.'⁴⁴ The Klan presented itself in a battle against these controlling Jewish and Catholic influences, describing the barring of *The Pilgrim* as 'one more victory to the credit of the Klan.'⁴⁵ Klan discourse manipulated this opposition, with *Searchlight* noting that 'for a long time Protestant clergy and laity...[have known of a]... deliberate attempt... [on the part of]... certain Jew picture show magnates to send out pictures for the purpose of bringing into contempt and ridicule the Protestant ministry of the land.'⁴⁶ The comments related to a specific protest against *The Pilgrim* in Walla Walla, but the Klan now presented the industry more broadly as a direct and deliberate threat to Protestantism, and thus to the Klan.

On occasion, the Klan aligned its criticisms of *The Pilgrim* to discourses surrounding Chaplin. *Imperial Night-Hawk* wrote of this 'vulgar Jewish comedian in the role of a Protestant minister,' while *Searchlight* wrote that the film was 'produced by Jews and starring a Jew ridiculing Protestant ministry.'⁴⁷ Although Chaplin was not Jewish, he regularly avoided questions on his ethnicity, and in light of his recent engagement to the exotic foreigner Pola Negri, Chaplin would appear an obvious target for the Klan.⁴⁸ The Klan protested strongly against Pola Negri's 1923 film *Bella Donna*, as I will discuss, and when complaining about *The Pilgrim* in July 1923, the Pittsburgh Klan referred disparagingly to Charlie Chaplin as 'Bella Donna's side partner.'⁴⁹ However, for the most part Klan newspapers preferred to blame the larger, faceless figures of the film industry for the perceived anti-Protestantism within *The Pilgrim*. Chaplin was a tool, a scapegoat, with the Klan presenting him as a product of a greater problem. *Dawn* highlighted this when complaining that 'Jewish producers recently prostituted the ability of Charlie Chaplin, the English comedian, who has been so well received in the United States.'⁵⁰

After the successful protests against *The Pilgrim*, Klan newspapers urged further action against other films that it felt misrepresented Protestantism. In June 1923 *Searchlight* encouraged Klansmen to stop ‘this constant adoration of the Catholic church by all classes,’ warning that the negative depiction of Protestant ministers ‘mellows the mind of the young and they consciously or unconsciously ask themselves: “I wonder whether I am of the right denomination to enter the kingdom of heaven?”’ The Klan outlined possible methods of protest, explaining that ‘you can raise a storm of unrest that will sweep the country. You can object to your local exhibitor, tell him why you do not like his picture.’ *Searchlight* suggested that ‘when you hit his pocket book he will complain to the booking house and they in turn to the manufacturer or studio.’⁵¹

The Pilgrim was therefore not the only film to receive attacks from the Klan over its representation of Protestantism. *Dawn* criticised D.W. Griffith’s 1923 film *The White Rose* as an ‘anti-Protestant’ play, complaining of the depiction of the Protestant minister and arguing that if a Jewish rabbi or Roman Priest was shown in such ‘infamous acts’ there would be outrage. The Klan proffered this sense of injustice around the presentation of its values, and used the discussion of Griffith’s film as an opportunity to stress the need for censorship and control ‘when certain moving picture theatres, catering to many thousands of men, women and children daily are permitted to exhibit films that strike at the very basis of American right-mindedness, the Protestant church.’⁵² *Searchlight* complained in March 1924 that ‘Catholicism is clearly screened in preference to American ideals.’ reiterating the familiar concerns about the representation of the clergy and suggesting once more that the public should ‘take another look at who is running the movies.’⁵³ The article urged immediate action and, within a month, The Fort Pierce Klan No. 85 in Florida had launched its own protest against the representation of Protestantism on screen. The official protest, reported in a number of Klan newspapers in April 1924, attacked producers for ‘portraying our

Protestant ministers and places of worship in a laughable, undignified way,' and promised to 'wage a relentless war' to stop such depictions.⁵⁴

The campaign against the misrepresentation of Protestantism continued well beyond *The Pilgrim*, and over a year after the initial protests, *Imperial Night Hawk* was still asking 'How many Protestant ministers have you seen taking the roles of clergy? Has it ever occurred to you that you nearly always find a Roman Catholic Priest on the job?' The Klan, through its newspapers, continued this campaign against film, complaining that 'the one hundred per cent Americans are sick of this sort of propaganda.'⁵⁵ The Klan fostered this concern about on screen representation and created a threatening opponent, by making this propaganda appear intentional and calculated: 'It is a wilful, deliberate, cunning piece of propaganda that is going on daily.' It again encouraged a public response, outlining the need for 'one hundred per cent Americans' to 'arouse public sentiment to the boiling point.'⁵⁶ A later article in *Kourier* also urged a reaction, asking 'What can I (Klansman) do?' One suggestion was to 'be quick to protest when you read anything derogatory to Protestantism or see anything that mocks it on the stage or on the screen.' Even in 1927, the Klan continued to reiterate the same arguments and to demand continued action, with *Kourier* urging Klansmen to 'protest to the editor of the newspaper or the magazine that slurs your faith, protest to the manager of the theatre where you see a profane play or picture.'⁵⁷

The Klan's subsequent criticisms of film often appeared to be shaped by the group's initial attacks on *The Pilgrim*. Mr. W. G. Montgomery, writing towards the end of 1924 in *Imperial Night-Hawk*, complained again that 'the movies are making a systematic attack on Protestantism,' with Protestant ministers only shown on screen 'with the purpose of creating laughter.' He criticised two further films, *The Inside of the Cup* and *Hell's Hinges*, for 'making a mock of Protestant religion.' These two films supposedly ridiculed prohibition, the very manifestation of the Klan and Protestant

cause in the 1920s. The Klan viewed the movies, and indeed the apparently foreign film industry, as a threat to prohibition, with *Imperial Night Hawk* writing that 'the movies are doing much to break down the eighteenth amendment and bring back the legalised saloon... Sarcastic flings at prohibition are common.'⁵⁸

These continued attacks by the Klan on the representation of Protestantism might have offered valuable publicity to the group, yet they also highlighted how important religion was to the modern Klan.⁵⁹ The Klan sought to define itself as a positive Protestant force, claiming at the time of the release of *The Pilgrim* that it 'is pro-America, pro-Protestantism, but anti-nothing,' and adding that 'Klansmen are not 'against' the Catholics or 'against' the Jews, but are 'for' Protestant Christianity, *first, last and all the time*.'⁶⁰ This positive propaganda was directed by Dr Evans, the Imperial Wizard of the Klan, who was keen to protect the reputation of his group. Yet the Klan continued to define itself against its opponents, complaining in *Dawn*, shortly after the release of *The Pilgrim*, that 'they [Jews] have used this great medium to ridicule American beliefs, creeds, and customs.' The Klan presented itself through its attacks on the apparently Jewish and Catholic film industry, as a religious group, protecting traditional Protestant values.⁶¹

Although the industry was perceived as having a stronger Jewish influence during the 1920s, the Klan still used debates around film representation to attack its other staunch opponents, the Catholics and Bolsheviks. *Dawn* warned in October 1923 that 'Roman Catholic propaganda is being spread throughout the country by motion picture stars who have organised themselves into the Catholic Motion Picture Actors' Guild.' This Guild was presented as an organised, deliberate threat to Klan ideals, influencing 'hundreds of thousands of Protestant children' who will be subjected to 'sugar coated doses of Catholicism.' The paper warned that there were five hundred movie stars and actresses in attendance at the last Guild meeting and that 'Protestants

will do well to keep their eyes open for the effects of their work on the screen.’⁶² At exactly the same time an editorial in the *Fiery Cross* claimed that ‘the screen today is alive with Catholic propaganda,’ with the writer complaining in particular about a recent screening in Indiana of the Norma Talmadge picture, *Ashes of Vengeance*. The editorial labelled the film ‘a direct insult to the intelligence of every Protestant; a distorter of history and merely a part of the gigantic system of Catholic propaganda now flooding this country.’⁶³

The Klan’s protests against film propaganda prompted a local picture house in the West to invite the Klan to a screening of the Lillian Gish film, *The White Sister* before its public release. A committee of Klansmen viewed the film and ‘pronounced it the most insidious piece of Roman Catholic propaganda that has been shown in this country.’ As a result the manager decided not to show the picture, and the Klan press demanded further action, stating that ‘the time is ripe for all good Protestants to stand together on this thing if they would put a stop to the Roman practice. Now is the time to strike, while the iron is hot.’⁶⁴ *Searchlight* also demanded action in 1924, stating that ‘if the Protestants of America want a square deal they should quickly decide to bar all shows which carry Roman propaganda.’ The criticisms of Catholic propaganda were still aligned to the Klan’s anti-Semitic attacks on the film industry, as the article argued that ‘Jewish money controls the movies, and the baleful influence of the papal hand is consequently felt throughout moviedom.’ The Klan presented the Catholic and Jewish forces in conjunction, collectively seeking to undermine the Klan and Protestantism, as the article further stated that ‘with the active co-operation of the Jewish element the Roman Catholics are working their propaganda to a fine finish.’⁶⁵

The Klan’s protests against ‘Roman propaganda’ continued and, in August 1924, *Searchlight* launched another extensive attack on the Catholic Motion Picture Actors’ Guild. It claimed that ‘thousands of Protestant performers are now out of work as the

Roman Catholic and Jewish influences gain complete mastery over the stage and screen.' The article suggested that 'the overwhelming majority of casting directors are Roman Catholics,' further speculating that the 'move against Protestant actors' was an attempt to 'Roman Catholicize the whole United States.' The West Texas *Fiery Cross*, in an article syndicated throughout the country, declared that 'an actor who would profess to be a Klansman might just as well cut his own throat, because Rome would see that he starved to death.' The article stated that 'Rome is determined also to make the Protestant religion the laughing stock of the nation,' as the Klan once more presented the 'foreign' film industry as a direct threat to the Klan.⁶⁶

The Klan defined and justified its own role in society through its criticisms of film representation. The Klan exploited and generated fears around Jewish and Catholic influences within society, and it also fuelled popular anxieties surrounding the mysterious and unseen Bolsheviks. In 1924 *Imperial Night-Hawk* reported that a recent attempt had been made to 'penetrate the American moving picture industry as a means of red propaganda in this country.' This typically vague piece reaffirmed the notion that the film industry, and indeed film as a medium, was something to be suspicious of, a threatening tool, controlled by unseen foreign enemies. A Russian film, entitled *The Fifth Year in Russia*, had been cancelled early in 1924 after protests from The American Legion amongst others, who complained that 'the purpose of the picture was to disseminate Soviet propaganda.'⁶⁷ The Klan responded to (and intensified) these existing fears, and further reported that a Bolshevik agent, named in *Searchlight* as Charles Recht, was planning on spending eight million dollars on 'anti-religious, anti-capitalistic' pictures. *Searchlight* claimed that Recht had 'consulted with Will Hays, head of the moving picture industry,' and had also met with the actress Norma Talmadge and her husband Joseph Schenck. Schenck, as a Russian born Jew might appear an obvious scapegoat for the Klan, but it is more significant to note how the Klan

established this foreign threat.⁶⁸ The Klan presented film as a powerful propagandist device, controlled by foreign influences, and its campaign against film propaganda thus served to generate a need for the Klan within modern America. The warning in *Searchlight* concluded:

And some people wonder why the Klan? There is oceans of work to be done in this country to offset such work if we want to keep America a safe place for Americans. Whose country is this anyway, if it is not for Americans?’⁶⁹

Klan groups campaigned not only against the representation of Protestantism on screen, but also against radio and stage productions, with *The Miracle* in 1923 receiving particular criticism.⁷⁰ *The American Standard* described the play as a ‘papal spectacle’ and ‘a colossal effort on the part of the popery, with the connivance of the Jewry, to advance the papal cause in America and other Protestant countries.’ The play, described as a ‘desperate effort “to make America Roman Catholic”,’ offered the Klan an opportunity to condemn the Catholic influence within American society and to emphasise this foreign threat.⁷¹ The Klan also highlighted the Jewish influence within the production of *The Miracle*, stressing the involvement of the Jewish manager, Max Reinhardt, and describing the play as ‘Jew-Jesuit propaganda.’ The Klan (along with other groups such as the Lord’s Day Alliance) also protested against *Rain*, a play in which ‘a Protestant minister is cast in such a disgraceful role.’⁷² *The Fiery Cross* reported that in Indiana, attendances for the play fell in light of reports in the Klan press that labelled the play as Catholic propaganda. However, an earlier article about the production in New York divided the audience again in religious terms and suggested that ‘so long as Sam Harris, the Jew owner, can get enough Irish and Jews to see the play, he will probably continue it for another 500 times.’⁷³ The Klan’s criticisms of

stage productions again drew out these broader divisions between itself and its opponents, with *Dawn* complaining about the 'constant propaganda in favor of Roman Catholicism and against Protestantism' on the New York stage in 1923.⁷⁴ Throughout this period, the Klan used debates on religious representation to criticise its opponents collectively, writing again in 1925 of the Jews that 'unite with Roman Catholics to censor the press.'⁷⁵

At the beginning of 1923 a play was staged in Chicago that aroused considerable interest in *Dawn*. A full page advertisement for *The Invisible Empire* explained that it was 'a sequel to *The Clansman*' and 'is to the speaking stage what *The Birth of a Nation* has been to the screen.' The interesting aspect of the show's reception (aside from the continuing links with *Birth*) was the manner in which the Klan discussed the play, again presenting itself as a victimised minority group, threatened by continual Jewish and Catholic propaganda. In a lengthy review in *Dawn*, the reviewer barely spoke of the play text itself, instead focusing on the censorship that the show faced. The article suggested that there is 'but one reason why this onslaught [censorship] took place,' explaining;

It is a PROTESTANT show, financed, and produced by Protestants for the purpose of promoting Protestantism, and this is the third time within eight months that the Protestants have been double crossed by an element that can stage anything from a gambling house to a Chinese smoke shop and through corrupt politics get away with.'⁷⁶

The Klan reworked the text, so that the prejudices and language expressed within the play were extended into the show's reception. The review in *Dawn* talked mysteriously of 'certain elements' fighting the Klan, because 'it is trampling on their flower beds of corruption.' A further review wrote of the 'forces that are foreign to a

free press,' again addressing the censorship of the play rather than the play itself.⁷⁷ The Klan created this sense of religious persecution and racist censorship as it sought to establish a justifiable cause for itself.⁷⁸ When the Klan complained about the banning of *Birth* in Chicago in 1924, it again spoke of the 'rabid discrimination' it faced, presenting itself as the target, not exponent, of discrimination.⁷⁹ The Klan reworked popular perceptions of itself and deployed the tactics of other minority groups in presenting itself as the victimised underdog. The Klan adopted the discourses of its religious opponents, but avoided presenting the Catholic and Jewish groups as minorities, so that it could reveal itself as an overpowered victim of their on-screen propaganda.⁸⁰

The Invisible Empire, as with *The Pilgrim*, or *Birth* served as a recruitment tool for the Klan, not simply in the text itself, but rather in the manner in which it was discussed. The reviewer encouraged Protestants to respond to these apparent injustices by 'joining the greatest organization in the world, THE KU KLUX KLAN.' The review concluded with a paragraph in bold and capitals, urging:

PROTESTANTS AND MEMBERS OF THE KU KLUX KLAN, GO SEE THIS
SHOW. LET'S PUT IT OVER THE TOP. BE ONE HUNDRED PER CENT
AMERICAN. LET US MAKE IT RUN A YEAR INSTEAD OF THREE
WEEKS- COME ON. LET'S GO!!⁸¹

'Jew movies urging sex vice'⁸²

While Klan groups were strongly opposing Chaplin's appearance in *The Pilgrim*, they were also launching protests against the Pola Negri film, *Bella Donna*. The film was briefly banned in Houston, Texas before the Memphis Klan issued a protest against the local exhibition of the film in May 1923. In Hickory, N. Carolina, the Klan carried

out newspaper advertisements warning a local theatre manager against showing the film.⁸³ *Fiery Cross* published a lengthy editorial entitled “‘Bella Donna’ – Bah!’ at the end of April, which described the film as ‘coarse, degrading and insulting’ and a ‘disgrace to the white race.’ The editorial suggested that ‘Pola Negri, Europe’s alleged star, must have received her inspiration from the same interests that inspired Charlie Chaplin in *The Pilgrim*,’ with the Klan press aligning these two films together and appearing to launch a broader campaign against the film industry.⁸⁴

The Klan described *Bella Donna* as ‘open propaganda for social equality’ and the Klan’s protests were now concerned not only with issues of religion, but also of race, as the Klan publicly opposed a film in which ‘a white woman submits herself to an Egyptian Negro only to be spurned by him.’ In billing the film, *Dawn* wrote that ‘the Polish actress is made to say ‘WHITE SKINNED LADIES WILL FLIRT WITH BLACK SKINNED MEN WHEN THEIR HUSBANDS ARE AWAY,’ while *Fiery Cross* reported that this line was used on an electric bulletin advertising the film in Houston.⁸⁵ The Klan opposed the film on racial grounds, as was also the case when the Klan protested against the Eugene O’ Neill play, ‘All God’s Chillun Got Wings’ less than a year later. The Klan’s protests against this ‘inter-racial play’ extended to a death threat sent to Eugene O’ Neill on Klan stationary. On the opening night newspapers also reported that a ‘yellow backed book bearing the letters K.K.K.’ was found in the auditorium.⁸⁶ The Klan press supported activity against the play, and discussed it in similar terms to *Bella Donna*. *Searchlight* highlighted the social threat carried by the play, even though it suggested that it would be African Americans rather than Klansmen responding violently to the play;

Just think of it, the white woman is required, in the closing scene of the play, to kiss the hand of the negro whose wife she has become. Can you imagine

anything more repulsive than that? There is enough racial trouble in America without manufacturing more of it through the drama which is calculated to stir the negroes of the country to violence towards the white race.⁸⁷

The Klan opposed both 'All God's Chillun Got Wings' and *Bella Donna* ostensibly on racial grounds, but the Klan's criticisms, particularly of *Bella Donna* were still motivated by the group's anti-Semitism. Firstly, the Klan aligned Pola Negri's ethnicity to issues of film morality. The Pittsburgh Klan complained to *Movie Weekly* about the 'low ideals of womanhood as are portrayed in *Bella Donna*,' and in the same context urged films to 'produce he-men and patriotic womanly women, not cigarette smoking devils who love poodle dogs more than they do babies.'⁸⁸ Negri's ethnicity made her a destabilising presence on film and Klan groups viewed her depiction of the 'loose woman' as a threat to domesticity and traditional womanhood.⁸⁹

Secondly, the Klan again blamed the apparently insidious morality displayed within *Bella Donna* on the more powerful 'Jewish' industry: 'Lacking that inborn feeling of supremacy toward the black races that is peculiar to the better born Americans, Jewish producers starred Pola Negri in a revolting play called "Bella Donna".' The suggestion was that the Jewish immigrants were unable to understand American customs and the 'de facto' segregation that dominated American race relations at this time. The representation was again blamed on the Jewish producers, and the Klan's protests against *Bella Donna* reveal once more the Klan's manipulation of film discourses.⁹⁰ The terms in which the Klan criticised *Bella Donna* were thus very similar to its simultaneous attacks on *The Pilgrim*. The Klan, through its press, highlighted the propagandist power of film and again presented the film as a personal attack on the Klan. *Fiery Cross* even suggested that 'hate for the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan could have inspired this picture.'⁹¹

Klan groups protested against these films, but at the same time, the Klan film group, Cavalier Motion Picture Company, was formed as a further response to the images produced by the 'Jewish' industry. Cavalier's secretary, Roscoe Carpenter told an open meeting in Kokomo, Indiana, in the summer of 1923 that Cavalier 'had been organized to produce pictures which would counteract the influence of certain productions which have been found objectionable to the Klan.'⁹² The criticisms of 'objectionable productions' continued during 1924, as the Klan now widely condemned the stream of sex plays appearing on screen.

The Klan published a pamphlet in 1924 that lambasted the films being produced by Paramount Pictures. Titles such as *Manhandled*, *The Enemy Sex* and *Changing Husbands* were emphatically attacked by the Klan, while Paramount's promotion of *The Female*, which promised to show Betty Compson 'more nearly nude than she has yet appeared on screen,' was immediately condemned. *Worldly Goods* was said to address a 'woman of independence' who marries a 'weakling' but falls in love with someone else. These subjects were clearly threatening to domesticity, and the social and gender roles that the Klan sought to preserve. Yet the criticisms of film morality still focussed predominantly on the Jewish influences within the film industry.⁹³

The American Standard reported on these Paramount films under the heading 'Jew Movies urging sex vice: Rome and Judah at work to pollute young America.' This article formed the basis of the Klan pamphlet, and again used the subject of film representation as an opportunity to attack the Jewish (and, to a lesser extent, Catholic) control of the film industry. The article began by claiming that 'Jew-Jesuit motion picture producers persist in making the screen a school for teaching seduction.' The on screen images, and the coming Paramount attractions were placed 'hand in hand' with a series of rapes and wild parties that had recently occurred at schools. The article presented the rape of a fifteen-year old girl in Kalamazoo, Michigan as a direct result of

the 'base tendencies' stimulated by 'certain motion pictures.' The article and subsequent pamphlet emphasised the influence of these films on children, and urged a united response: 'Every parent- teacher's organization, every educational association, every women's club, every minister, every friend of decency should rise unitedly against the flood of oriental and papal debauchery which floods the country through Jew- Jesuit motion pictures.'⁹⁴

The Klan was certainly not alone in attacking these films. *Kourier* published an address given by the former President of the American Bar Association, before the Arkansas Educational Association in 1925, which complained about the popular films of the last year: 'It seemed too many of these included subjects which dealt altogether too much with the sex problem and the old but everlasting triangle of life.' The address highlighted the influence of these films in educating the nation's youth, linking the morals on-screen with the well being of the nation: 'Save the home-life and you save the boy and girl, and when you save the boy and girl, you save the nation.'⁹⁵ Even with *The Pilgrim*, there were a number of groups, including The Preacher's Protestant Association and The Evangelical Ministers' Association in Atlanta, that protested strongly against the film.⁹⁶

In many respects the Klan was merely opportunistic, exploiting the popular debates over censorship and film morality that littered the papers after the War. *The New York Times* in 1921 reported that two boys in Michigan had confessed to an attempt to wreck a train 'like they had seen on screen,' while another 15 year old boy, who shot a man, was apparently 'inspired by movies.'⁹⁷ The press was filled with tales outlining the dangers of film, and the Klan publicly exploited this fear. *Imperial Night Hawk* directly linked the movies to crime, writing that 'every keen observer knows that the commercialised movie is America's biggest school of crime.' This elaborate claim was taken even further: 'As a result [of movies] the city of New York is literally filled

with boy thieves and criminals and degenerate girls.’⁹⁸ The paper presented the film industry in direct opposition to the church (and by extension the Klan) arguing that ‘the biggest menace to Sunday school work and organised religion in general in the United States today is the commercialized motion picture industry.’ In 1924 *Searchlight* quoted at length Mrs. Alfred J. Howell, the counsellor of the New York Civic league, who suggested that moving pictures were one of the principle reasons why ‘immorality has been made popular.’ Mrs. Howell offered a prayer for ‘this wicked and perverse generation’ and suggested that the loosening of morals, and in particular the increase in kissing, hugging and ‘petting’ was a direct result of the movies; ‘They [modern girls] get the idea from the movies, as there is plenty of it on the screen and often in the audience.’ Once more, *Searchlight* presented this problem in religious terms, referring to the ‘moving pictures, most of which are controlled by Jews.’⁹⁹

The Klan, by emphasising the influence and propagandist power that film exercised over its audience, promoted the potential role of the film industry. *Searchlight* suggested that ‘with its eight million students daily, the moving picture ought to be the greatest university in the world.’ The Klan further suggested that the movies were as important as school textbooks.¹⁰⁰ The Klan constantly reiterated the influence of films on children and presented itself as a moral guardian, wishing ‘to appeal on behalf of the children.’¹⁰¹ In 1923 *Searchlight* had quoted Thomas Edison, who said that ‘whoever controls the motion picture industry controls the most powerful medium of influence over the people.’ Edison also spoke at The National Motion Picture Conference, which was called by five churches in Washington in 1924. The conference released a statement that ‘the political, social and moral welfare of the world is seriously threatened by the motion picture industry’ and these comments were again printed and supported within the Klan press.¹⁰² A year later, *The American Standard* complained about an advertisement for *A Thief in Paradise* presented in New York by ‘Samuel Goldstein

(Jew),’ which promised to show the audience ‘a polo match of blondes vs. brunettes in bathing suits.’ The Klan complaint again concerned the ‘poison... that the anti-Christian Jews are ladling out to the children of America.’ The article then offered three lengthy quotes from ‘eminent jurists’ emphasising the ‘salacious and vicious’ influence of films on children.¹⁰³

The Klan presented the issue of censorship and the need for cleaner pictures as a social necessity, and effectively reached out beyond the existing Klan membership for support. The Klan appealed to potential supporters, by offering this issue as a moral responsibility for all parents, but it promoted its own values within this moral campaign, by presenting this problem in religious terms. The 1924 Klan pamphlet urged concerned moral guardians to unite against the ‘flood of oriental and papal debauchery which floods this country through motion pictures. These enemy aliens possess the false notion that they are all powerful.’ The pamphlet asked whether parents are ‘willing to have the minds of their boys and girls defiled and their lives demoralized in order that Jew-Jesuit picture producers may gratify their lust for gold? Surely not.’ The Klan presented this widely recognised fear surrounding film morality as a religious problem and, furthermore, constantly linked Jews with modern consumerism. The Paramount advertisement that was sent to exhibitors argued the benefit of screening Gloria Swanson in *Manhandled*: ‘Imagine the punch, the gowns and best of all the profits.’ The Klan response to this was simple: ‘They [Jews] are willing to despoil a nation for a pot of gold.’¹⁰⁴ The Klan’s film discourse embraced broad disparate groups by suggesting that the problem was common to all conscientious parents, teachers and churchmen. The Klan then carefully promoted its own racist and social values within these discourses.

The Klan was certainly not alone in criticising the film industry in anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic terms. *Variety* had published an article in December 1920 entitled ‘Jews resent slander,’ which had explained that ‘professionals of Jewish persuasion’

intended to form an alliance to combat the increasing anti-Semitic abuse that was being labelled at them.¹⁰⁵ During 1920, the year of the Klan's effective re-emergence, Henry Ford's paper *Dearborn Independent* began its virulent attacks on 'the Jew,' unleashing a series of articles under the heading 'The International Jew: The World's Problem.' In February 1921, *Dearborn Independent* ran a piece entitled 'Jewish supremacy in Motion Picture World' in which it explained that the motion picture was 'exclusively under the control, moral and financial, of the Jewish manipulators of the public mind.'¹⁰⁶ A series of articles, entitled 'Baring the Heart of Hollywood' appeared later in 1921, further critiquing the Jewish involvement within the film industry.¹⁰⁷ For the Klan aligning criticisms of modernity with fears about Jewish immigration allowed the group to promote its necessary role within society and to define itself against a manufactured foreign threat. For Ford, his anti-Semitism served in part as a defence of his own technological modernity.¹⁰⁸ Although Ford may not have been an official member of the Klan, and indeed would later oppose the group in supporting Mayor Smith in Detroit in the election of 1925, his anti-Semitic writing certainly influenced the terms in which the Klan presented its attacks on the film industry.¹⁰⁹

The Klan embraced and extended Ford's anti-Semitic writing, so that it presented the problems within the film industry in relation to existing, high profile social concerns. The Klan wrote of the 'White slave dealers in motion pictures,' emphasising the severity of this film issue by offering a comparison with the established fear of white slavery.¹¹⁰ White slave dealers were widely perceived as being Jewish, and so this comparison also served to position this extremely dangerous Jewish enemy into a fresh environment. Years later, in 1933, *Kourier* described the 'Jew controlled moving picture industry' as 'the most putrid and evil smelling business in the United States,' claiming that 'the White Slave business is respectable' in comparison. The terms in which the Klan attacked the film industry largely remained the same, as *Kourier*

complained that 'the Jews, parasites, filchers, usurers always, have found...an ideal vehicle for the coining of the dirtiest kind of dollars and the pleasurable debauchery of the morals of the young.'¹¹¹

The Klan press also compared the situation within the film industry to Prohibition, an existing Klan crusade. These comparisons enabled the Klan to transfer an established Klan enemy into a new social context, presenting the film industry as an outlet for this existing anti-Semitism. This is apparent in the Klan pamphlet of 1924, in which the writer urged the Klan (and concerned moral guardians) to crush the film industry, as they had previously destroyed the liquor industry:

They [the film producers] occupy the position which the brewers and distillers did ten years ago, when they believed themselves impregnable and all powerful. But once the sentiment against the liquor manufacturers and dealers crystallized and gathered momentum, they were crushed, never to rise again.'

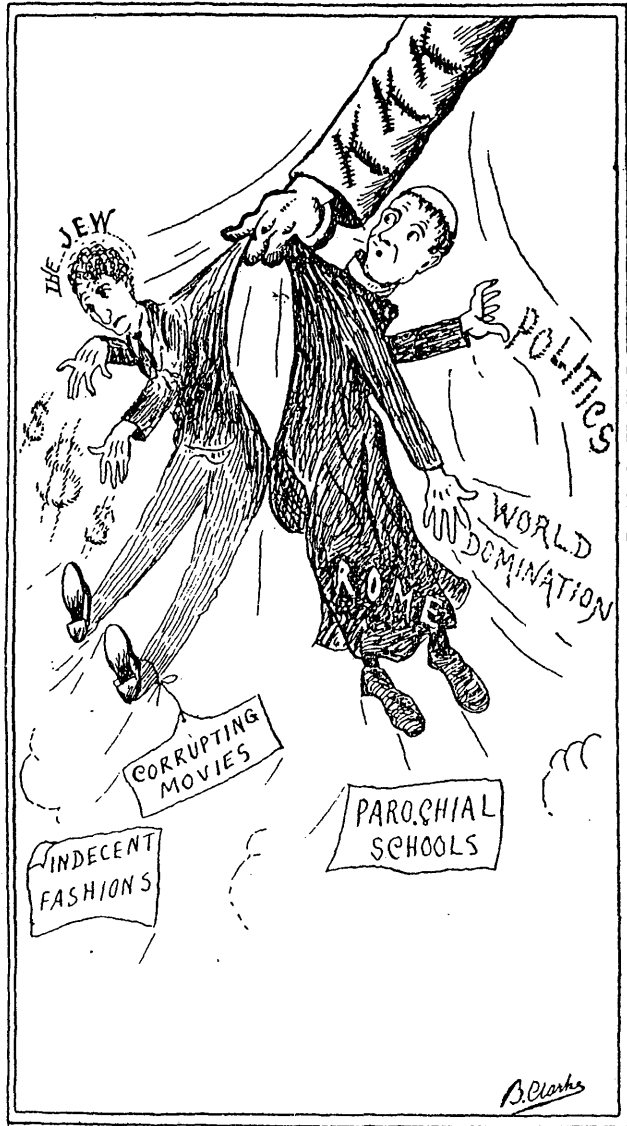
The film industry appeared as a modern crusade for the Klan, which was able to reallocate its racist fears surrounding the Jewish bootleggers into this fresh social context. The Klan still fought to stop bootlegging, and often presented itself as a protector of law and order. However, with the prohibition law established, the Klan turned its attention to a modern target. *Variety* appeared to recognise the value of the film industry to the Klan, when considering the Klan pamphlet in 1924:

Whether it has been the war, prohibition or pictures to set in the wild, reckless age this country is now passing through is a matter the pamphlet does not take into consideration, but it does dwell upon the recklessness of the youth of the country and since the war has ended and a violation of the liquor law is a crime,

there remains moving pictures for the target, with Paramount as well as others becoming the targets for their own bullets.¹¹²

Variety suggested that the Klan attacked the film industry because it offered the only remaining explanation for the problems of modern society, but more significantly this was a target that could be aligned to broader racial and religious fears. Throughout the 1920s, the Klan continued to exploit the existing discourse around film morality to condemn its Jewish and Catholic opponents. When *Kourier* attacked the 'calamity' of film morality in 1926, the criticism was again labelled not at the films but at those producing them, with the 'questionable movie productions' served up to satisfy the producer's 'own greedy lust for gold.'¹¹³ The Klan presented the popular scapegoats for the ills of society, 'modern dress, the closed car, and the movie,' yet recognised that the problem concerned the perceived Jewish and Roman control of these ideas: 'As long as men continue to commercialize and exploit others for the accomplishment of their own ends and the realization of their own interests, we cannot hope for any marked change.'¹¹⁴

There may have been difficulties in presenting ethnic targets on screen during the 1920s, as I will discuss in chapter three, yet the Jewish scapegoat was certainly served up off screen as the corrupting influence within the film industry. Klan cartoons revealed this, with the cartoon 'In Proper Hands' (see fig. 2) displaying 'the Jew' with the words 'Corrupting movies' attached to his foot. The cartoon suggests that the Klan's primary problem with Jewish people is this control of film, and once more the alleged Jewish desire for money and consumerism is emphasised, as 'the Jew' is perceived to be concerned with money over morality. 'On the Run' (see fig. 3) similarly defines 'the Jew' by his influence in the movies, suggesting that a large basis of the Klan opposition to Jewish people was on account of film. As I have argued, the Klan used film as a



IN PROPER HANDS



ON THE RUN

vehicle to attack 'the Jew' (rather than attacking 'the Jew' because of their control of film and exhibition), but it is clear that 'the Jew' and movies are intrinsically linked by the Klan in the 1920s, and an opposition to the perceived Jewish control of film is an important propagandist tool for the Klan.¹¹⁵

'Hollywood certainly needs a Hitler'¹¹⁶

The Klan used debates on the social function of the cinema building and on film representation partly as a means to attack its religious and racial opponents. The cinema and film were perceived as threatening because they represented the advances of this immigrant society, but 'Hollywood' itself, the new conceptual centre for the film industry, served as a microcosm of this broader social change, as an area where, it was thought, races could mix, and where social and class boundaries were fluid.¹¹⁷ The terms in which Hollywood was discussed by reformers and prohibition groups, as an area of wild living, short marriages, excessive drinking and instant fame, presented this term as an antithesis to the Klan's own values.

By 1920, the year of the Klan's widespread re-emergence, popular discourse positioned Hollywood as a very public threat to the values of church and prohibition groups. As tabloid journalism intensified, and star magazines became more interested in off screen antics, reports increasingly concerned the dangers of Hollywood. The divorces of the teens, such as Mary Pickford's, were largely overlooked, yet by 1920, *Photoplay Magazine* was commenting on the clutch of film divorces by reprinting the popular line 'Are you married, or do you live in Los Angeles?' *Movie Weekly* published articles entitled 'Marriages not made in Heaven' and 'What evil influence wrecks the happy homes of Moviedom?'¹¹⁸ In 1921 the Klan in California led a doctor from his house, hanged him until unconscious, revived him and then flogged him back into

unconsciousness. His crime? He was carrying out divorce proceedings against his wife. This may sound sensationalist, yet the Grand Dragon repeatedly spoke out against divorce, believing that 'we [the Klan] should feel free to take whatever action may be necessary to curb this practice.' He explained that 'Wedlock is, or should be, sacred' and saw the threat to marriage as a threat to homelife and thus to the morals of children. 'It is beyond question,' he wrote, 'that there must be a happy, wholesome family life for our nation's development to continue and for its perpetuity to be assured.' The wild reporting on Hollywood immediately placed it in opposition to the Klan.¹¹⁹

Hollywood was presented as a threat to domesticity, particularly as women were reported to be moving there in a bid to find work. These accounts were often dramatically retold, with Ruth Waterbury writing an article in *Photoplay* in 1924 entitled 'Don't go to Hollywood.' The piece began, 'Don't go to Hollywood! Don't go! Don't go, no matter what beauty, talent or youth you have.' *Movie Weekly* had a fresh tale for every week, from 'No Girl should come to Hollywood without money warns Mary Pickford' to 'Should a girl be chaperoned in Hollywood?' *Fiery Cross* reported Pickford's warnings in December 1923, with Pickford urging the girls to 'take mamma along. You'll need her.' Hollywood was perceived as a dangerous, sexual space, particularly in light of the Fatty Arbuckle scandal, and thus appeared threatening for women. The concept of Hollywood, as a term to describe the activities and apparent loose living within the film community, emerged at a significant time, alongside feminism, voting rights, and new fashions, with the concept aligned to this modern destabilising world.¹²⁰

The plethora of scandals that hit the film industry in the 1920s also presented Hollywood in direct opposition to the Klan, with the fears brought out in the public response to the widely discussed Fatty Arbuckle scandal, consistent with those addressed in Klan literature. Debates on the loss of sexual and moral control, new

wealth, blurred gender roles (with Arbuckle's frequent appearances in drag and as a baby), excess, and drink all emerged from the large figure of Arbuckle.¹²¹ This concern over drinking was particularly significant for the Klan and emphasised in discourses surrounding both Arbuckle and Hollywood. Elinor Glyn asked in *Motion Picture Magazine*, 'Why must people drink to excess?' and talked of actresses who seemed to think it was 'the right thing to get drunk.' Hollywood was presented as a direct threat to prohibition, which with its supercharged feelings of nationalism and Protestantism had been widely adopted as a Klan cause. Leroy A. Curry, in his 1924 book *The Ku Klux Klan Under the Searchlight*, stressed the importance of prohibition to the Klan, and presented this issue in patriotic terms, with the enemies of prohibition, labelled as 'un-American' and as the deadliest enemies of America. Christopher Cocolchos, in his study of the Klan in Anaheim, California, suggested that the Klan enjoyed success there, as in many other areas, primarily as enforcers of the prohibition laws. The opportunistic Klan created a demand for itself by claiming that the police was unable to deal with the 'whiskey runners,' 'scallywags' and 'grafters'. This was probably, as Cocolchos suggests, 'more myth than reality,' but the Klan fostered this negative image in order to promote its own value. Hollywood was similarly adopted as a high profile, public threat to prohibition, with Glyn in her condemnation of drink in Hollywood concluding in disbelief: 'If I were a man and once saw the lady of my heart with a maudlin look in her eye, and a thickness of speech, I should be sick with disgust and would never want to kiss her again.'¹²²

Moral reformers presented Hollywood as a carefully constructed representation of society's ills. Susan Brady inadvertently made this point when attacking Hollywood in *Motion Picture Magazine* in 1921. She presented the industry as a scaled down version of all society, as 'the essence of conglomeration that comprises a great city...[with] its bloated capitalists, its wily politicians...its natural leaders, its artistic

clique... its money mad, its eternal hedonists, its pornographers.'¹²³ The industry became a symbol of all that was wrong with society, but more than that it became a microcosm of America, with the problems of the nation expressed through the image of Hollywood. For the Klan, Hollywood was again defined by its racial and religious construction, as the Klan's criticisms ultimately appeared to concern the fluid social boundaries that Hollywood seemed to encourage. Noah Thompson wrote in 1924 of the 'tourists of all nations' that filled California, claiming that less than 1,000 adults amongst the 800,000 people living in the state were native born. Thompson wrote romantically of the opportunities in California as 'the very stars of heaven spell Opportunity!' yet it was this lack of social order and tradition that concerned the Klan. Hollywood, California, was a warning, a representation of an immigrant land, filled with outsiders.¹²⁴

The ideals of American life, the notion of equality and of America as a land of opportunity, were shown in the image of Hollywood, as immigrants and men and women of all classes were able to work and move up the social ladder. Moral reformers warned of idols 'showered with gold,' with Susan Brady highlighting the dangers of acquired wealth, as she wrote, 'she, who was nobody, is now well-known; who had nothing, now has everything, for whom luxury is now become necessity. Fame and Fortune have been practically thrust upon her.'¹²⁵ The dangers of money and fame were also expressed through the figure of Arbuckle, with *Dallas Morning News* writing of 'men and women of humble beginning suddenly possessed of fabulous wealth because of a pretty face, a fat physique, wavy hair or a simpering smile.'¹²⁶ The Klan regularly condemned the desire for fame and recognition without achievement, with *Kourier* for example, reporting the tale of an Ohio woman who, 'admitting she was moved by the desire to have her picture appear in the newspapers, was recently arrested for having set her house on fire.' However, for the Klan its criticisms of the social fluidity of Hollywood were again inspired by its religious and racial attitudes, as the Klan divided

and defined people by race, religion and nationality, more than wealth or social background.

The Klan focused on ideals of racial fixity, and although the group operated with a clear social hierarchy, the Klan appeared less concerned by class divisions within its native-born white Protestant members. Dr Evans may have claimed in 1926 that 'we are the average citizen of the old stock. Our members and leaders are all of this class,' but at its height, the Klan stretched beyond this category of 'plain people' to senators and leading members of the community.¹²⁷ The appeal to the lower reaches of society, made as the reputation of the group was crumbling, sought to attract those figures most concerned for their social and economic position, in light of competition for work from immigrants. Defining social positions and work opportunities by race and religion ensured that every native-born white Protestant had a lower racial scapegoat to define himself against. Hollywood appeared dangerous to the Klan, because it offered an opportunity for these immigrants to earn wealth and fame, and thus change their social position.¹²⁸

Although moral reformers illustrated the social dangers of 'Hollywood,' the Klan would appear less active and vociferous in opposing 'Hollywood' than in its criticisms of film representation.¹²⁹ When the Klan did embrace the tales of scandals, divorces and wild parties, it ultimately used the attacks on Hollywood once more as an opportunity to attack its Jewish opponents, with the Klan defining Hollywood by its racial construction. These wild tales were manipulated and presented as the fault of the Jewish producers. *Kourier* wrote as late as 1933 of 'the orgies which have become nationally infamous,' directly relating these activities to the 'greasy hawked nosed merchants of Hollywood.' The Klan may not have been responsible for the wild image of Hollywood, yet it did emphasise the Jewish influence within Hollywood, thus showing the threat of this racial opponent on American society: 'This is the type of

man,' *Kourier* wrote of Jewish film producers in 1933, 'to whom the unthinking American public confides the educational amusement of the nation's youth. Hollywood certainly needs a Hitler!'¹³⁰

Baseball and the creation of scandal

The Klan viewed the film scandals of the 1920s as products of this immigrant society, but a closer look at the other most famous scandal of the period, involving the Chicago White Sox baseball team of 1919 (which was not brought to trial until 1921), is valuable in understanding the terms in which the Klan viewed film and Hollywood during this period. Sam Stoloff, in his comparative study of the White Sox and Arbuckle tales, sees both presented as the work of Jewish corruptors undermining American life. Yet I would suggest that there are crucial distinctions between their receptions.¹³¹ The baseball scandal, which involved the throwing of the World Series by eight members of the White Sox, presented traditional American life undermined by an outside foreign influence, while the film scandals involved a new threatening industry run from within by the very forces that undermined baseball.

Contemporary newspapers presented Hollywood and the film industry as products of the Klan's immigrant opponents, yet baseball, in contrast, was supported and adopted by the Klan as a symbol of traditional American identity. Film stars recognised the 'purity of the great national pastime,' with Eliot Asinoff explaining that 'Hollywood movie stars wanted to show their fans that they were as American as any of them and loved baseball.'¹³² The Klan embraced the sport, with Klan festivals usually featuring baseball, while Klan papers would report the scores of these games - 'Palace Department 32, Accounting Department 0. Believe it or not as you like' - and comment on the number of new Klan teams 'flying thick and fast.' *Imperial Night-Hawk* proudly

commented on the number of Klan players in this most American of sports, with one major league baseball team from a town heralded as being very anti-Klan said to 'boast nine one hundred percenters in the line up.'¹³³ The Klan presented the sport in direct opposition to threatening foreign forces, with Klan cartoons frequently featuring hooded figures protecting the country with a baseball bat from outside (often Jewish and Catholic) enemies.

The Klan's adoption of baseball as a symbol of national identity ensured that the group viewed attacks on the sport, much like the on-screen ridiculing of Protestantism, as personal attacks on the ideals of the modern Klan. For example, when in 1923 vandals damaged Wrigley Baseball Park, thirty-six hours before the first game of the Chicago Cubs' season, the Klan press viewed the vandalism as a racially motivated, personal attack on William Wrigley Jr., the owner of the Cubs, who it was reported was a Klan member.¹³⁴ According to *Dawn*, the police investigating the incident admitted that they were investigating from the 'anti-Ku Klux angle.'¹³⁵ By aligning itself with baseball, the Klan suggested that the foreign influences undermining baseball were also threatening the work of the Klan. The Klan could therefore once more illustrate its necessary social role as a guardian of popular, traditional American values.

In its attacks on film representation, the Klan invariably blamed the Jewish producers, and similarly the blame for the corruption within baseball was placed not on the white American ballplayers, but on the Jewish gamblers. These immigrants were seen to be undermining baseball, shattering not only American pride, but also, more importantly, American identity. This was evident as early as 1919, when *The Sporting News*, a famous weekly baseball magazine, responded to the rumours of a fix:

Because a lot of dirty, long nosed, thick-lipped and strong-smelling gamblers butted into the World Series- an American event, by the way- and some of said

gentleman got crossed, stories were peddled that there was something wrong with the way the games were played.¹³⁶

The corruption was placed firmly at the feet of Jews, and Henry Ford's *Dearborn Independent* served up a host of anti-Semitic polemics on the subject during 1921. One piece, headlined 'Jewish gamblers corrupt American baseball,' set up 'American' baseball in direct opposition to the Jewish influences. The paper wrote of Grover Cleveland Alexander, the American pitcher called up to play in a controversial game for Chicago, hurling 'his heart out to beat Philadelphia and thwart the Jew gamblers.'¹³⁷ The Klan did not instigate the responses to the scandal, but it did benefit from the discourses and subsequently exploit these established anti-Semitic attitudes. The Klan later asserted that 'as their national game, Americans hold it too highly to permit any crookedness entering into it. At heart Americans are good sportsmen- and good sportsmen are honest!' The Klan emphasised the foreign influences threatening American identity, as *Kourier* claimed that '90 per cent of the book-makers and betters at the Polo Grounds are either of foreign birth, or are sprung from foreign-born parents. They have no interest in Athletics except to bet on the contests.'¹³⁸

The film and Baseball scandals were both reworked as the fault of the Jewish. *Dearborn Independent* wrote that 'if fans wish to know the trouble with American baseball, they have it in three words- too much Jew.' The Baseball scandal cemented this Jewish scapegoat, emphasised the threat of aliens on American identity, and showed the perceived threat of foreigners in the entertainment industry. Given the discourses surrounding the immigrant nature of the film industry, and the wayward values of Hollywood, the film industry was always ripe for a scandal after the Black Sox tale. Harold Brackman has recently argued that the 'rise of Hollywood's Jewish mogul was coincidental rather than causative' to the film scandals, yet while the morals and actions

of stars were obviously not connected to the Jewish involvement within the industry, it is no coincidence that the scandals arrived at the same time as the Jewish moguls. The scandals were only scandals because of their reception, and the desire for a negative presentation of the industry was fuelled by the perceived Jewish control of Hollywood.¹³⁹

It is intriguing that there were so many film scandals between 1921 and 1924, yet it was inevitable that moral reformers would manipulate any indication of transgression within Hollywood. It was not the scandals that were products of their time, but rather the responses to these events, and the eagerness of conservatives to create a 'scandal.' Scandal and Hollywood were perfect, cleverly fostered bedfellows in the 1920s, and moral reformers, such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), certainly targeted Hollywood after the passing of the prohibition laws, using the film scandals to draw attention to the inherent transgressions within cinema.¹⁴⁰ Even before the Arbuckle scandal, the industry was extremely sensitive of its public image, attempting to promote its value within society firstly with the establishment of the Americanism committee and then by aligning itself with worthy charitable causes. A massive charity drive, supposedly aimed at saving 250,000 starving European children, was announced in *Moving Picture World* in January 1921. The paper explained that 'by a rare stroke of good fortune the industry now has a chance to prove its spirit, its kindliness, and its broad minded character.' This 'rare stroke of good fortune,' the imminent death of many starving European children, makes it quite apparent that it was the fate of the industry that was of more pressing concern, as the industry fought to protect its reputation even before the Arbuckle scandal.¹⁴¹ The scandal can therefore be viewed as the eruption of conservative fears, fostered since the War, which the industry was initially unable to fight off.

In 1921, the huge level of outcry against the Fatty Arbuckle scandal forced the industry to introduce morality clauses and ultimately to bring in a non-industry gentile (Hays) to regulate the industry.¹⁴² Scandal was an important constructed conservative device, but there is little evidence of the Klan responding directly to Arbuckle. Arbuckle was condemned by church leaders and even denounced in Congress. 'At Hollywood, California, is a colony of these people,' complained Senator Myers of Montana, 'where debauchery, riotous living, drunkenness, ribaldry, dissipation, free love, seem to be conspicuous.'¹⁴³ Protests against Arbuckle led to the withdrawal of his films in areas throughout the country, including Pittsburgh, Detroit, LA, and Memphis, all within a week of the scandal breaking, yet there is no evidence of Klan groups directly organising boycotts of his films or offering public protests against them.¹⁴⁴ This may be because the Klan was not yet a fully organised national group when Arbuckle became entangled in scandal in September 1921. The local and national Klan press came to prominence in the next few years, and so perhaps the Klan was less able to express a unified response to Arbuckle. Yet even in subsequent years the Klan did not refer directly to Arbuckle, instead referring repeatedly to *The Pilgrim*, *Bella Donna* and issues of on screen representation. This may suggest that the Klan was more concerned with on screen representation than off screen scandal, but the Klan's attacks on film representation were still connected to concerns about Hollywood and the off screen antics of stars and producers.

When writing in response to the Klan's attacks on the films produced by Paramount in 1924, *Variety* noted that 'the more divorces, separations and scandals cropping up in Hollywood, that much more dangerous do mothers know pictures will become.'¹⁴⁵ William Desmond Taylor, Mary Miles Minter, Wallace Reid, and Fatty Arbuckle, all involved in scandals of varying degrees, were all contracted to Paramount, and the attacks on the films produced by Paramount were clearly influenced by the

Klan's attitude towards the company. The Klan was concerned as much with those producing the images as with the images themselves, and the Klan presented Paramount as the foremost example of Jewish control within the industry. The Klan highlighted the 'domination of that organization by the former Jewish furrier, Adolph Zukor, its president' and particularly criticised Zukor as he was the first to control film through production, distribution and exhibition. Klan papers emphasised that the 'Judas Iscariot Jews... moved to get a strangle hold upon each of the branches of the business' and published articles attacking and exposing the 'Jewish movie trust.'¹⁴⁶

Searchlight complained in 1924 that 'the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, the biggest movie trust in the world, maintains a Roman Catholic censorship board in New York City.' The Klan presented the company as a religious group, which was threatening to the Klan's own Protestant values. *The American Standard* reported the findings of the Federal Trade Commission in 1925, and discussed at length the working relationship between 'the Jew, Adolph Zukor, head of the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation and the Jew, Marcus Loew.' The paper declared that 'these two Jewish families dominate the picture industry.'¹⁴⁷ *The Dearborn Independent* had drawn attention to the Jewish control of the industry in 1921 and presented Famous Players-Lasky as the 'dominant power' in production, distribution and exhibition. The paper described Zukor as an 'ambitious foreigner,' and presented his company as representative of the Jewish control of the entire industry. The piece added that 'a gentile has no chance to advance in his organization... as soon as they are squeezed dry they are supplanted with young Jews whom he has had in training.'¹⁴⁸ Paramount was a dominant force within the industry, and the first and most powerful example of a vertically integrated film company. The scandals may therefore appear as a conservative attempt at regulating this most powerful 'Jewish' enterprise, and certainly the Klan's attacks on Paramount films were directly linked again to a critique of the foreigners

producing and controlling film. Paramount was a dominant microcosm of the industry for the Klan, and so criticisms of film representation and Hollywood were directly aligned to an attack on the Jewish control of the industry.

I have suggested that, regardless of the Klan's involvement in directing the terms of the scandal, the Klan responded to the fears brought out in the Arbuckle affair, and appeared in direct opposition to this manufactured concept of Hollywood. However, the Klan's involvement in Hollywood needs to be considered more closely. This opposition may not have been purely ideological, with the Klan extremely active in California. David Chalmers has argued that Klan violence in California was 'as brutal as anywhere in the South,' with Hollywood as a geographical area, serving as a representation of this broader concept. By 1923 California was recognised as 'a strong Klan state,' and confrontation within the region was widely reported in Klan papers, with, for example, a state convention in Oakland in 1924 cancelled after news of an assassination plot on one of the Klansmen due to attend.¹⁴⁹ The film press also suggested that the Klan might actually be an active force within Hollywood, not only opposing Hollywood as a conceptual idea, but also violently operating within the film community. This was most clearly revealed in discourses in 1923 that followed the murder of director William Desmond Taylor.

'Did movie Ku Klux slay Wm D. Taylor?'¹⁵⁰

A year after the much publicised murder of film director William Desmond Taylor, *Movie Weekly* offered a possible solution to this unsolved crime. On the front cover of their 24 March 1923 edition, was the question 'Did Movie Ku Klux slay Wm D. Taylor?' A lengthy article within the magazine extended this question, asking 'Is there a Ku Klux Klan in the movies?'

The article did not directly accuse the Klan of Taylor's murder, but asked 'Is there an invisible power in the movies which shrouded in all of the foreboding secrecy of the Ku Klux Klan juggles with the lives and fates of picture folks to accomplish revenge and blackmail by striking in the dark?' The article linked this Klan group with a succession of crimes, noting that 'during the past year or two the motion picture world has furnished us with several crimes which may have been committed by a well-organized clique, operating systematically in coolly calculated secrecy.' The writer, T. Howard Kelly, linked the organisation with the recent murder of 'pretty' Fritzi Mann, a dancer and occasional movie player, and even suggested that the surprise retirement of a 'certain well-known girl star' (possibly Pearl White) might be the result of a 'force which held her in thrall- a force which she had offended in some unknown way.' The evidence offered was inferred ('impossible to disclose') rather than revealed, but what is of most interest is not the possible validity of these claims, but rather the manner in which *Movie Weekly* presented the Klan and the film industry as antagonistic opponents.¹⁵¹

The possible involvement of the Klan (or a Klan-like group) in these scandals offered a defence against the widespread criticisms labelled against the industry. The article suggested that these scandals were produced by this 'invisible power [that] worked its evil designs in the studios,' with the film industry presented as an unfortunate victim. The film industry (as represented by *Movie Weekly*) defended itself by shifting blame onto the Klan. The article featured a drawing of a Klansman shooting at a picture of Taylor, as the negative publicity generated by these scandals, now switched to a lengthy critique of the Klan. The writer recounted tales of a midnight flogging, and explained that in Louisiana, troops were recently called 'in order to shield the people from the menace of an armed and hooded force that went about in the night.' The article presented the Klan as a direct threat to the film industry, concluding that 'if

it [the industry] is to succeed in accomplishing the high objectives of picturedom, [it] must work toward its goal unhindered by the machinations of any invisible power.’¹⁵²

Discourse surrounding Taylor’s death had speculated on his sexuality, his tempestuous relationship with female film stars (most notably Mabel Normand, who, aside from the killer, was the last person to see him alive) and his opium and drink parties. Following on from the Arbuckle scandal, the terms in which the press and public addressed the murder once more appeared to place Hollywood as the antithesis of the modern Klan. The evidence of Klan involvement in the murder was negligible, but the magazine presented a clearly defined opponent, resorting to stereotype when discussing the Klan, just as the Klan presented a monolithic, negative depiction of Hollywood. This simplistic definition presented the Klan and Hollywood as contrasting extremes, which was perhaps best evidenced by Jackie Coogan’s comments in *Movie Weekly*. Eight-year old Coogan was guest editor of *Movie Weekly* for a week and offered his own views on this serious and sensitive subject. Coogan’s words, self-contained within a box in the article, explained, ‘I don’t know what all this means, but Daddy says if it’s true, it’s certainly ‘bad dope.’ I hope the Ku Klux won’t get Mother or Daddy.’¹⁵³

The discourse between *Movie Weekly* and the Klan did not end here. In May 1923, barely a month after the previous report, an article appeared entitled ‘Movie Weekly writer is threatened by Ku Klux Klan.’ In the article, the writer T. Howard Kelly explained that he had received a letter from Washington warning him to keep quiet about the Klan’s involvement in these murders. Further threats followed by telephone with one man asking Kelly, ‘are you going to keep your mouth shut about the K.K.K. in the movies? If not you go the way of William Desmond Taylor and Fritz Mann.’ The whole incident was certainly sensationalised by the film magazine, with the article including a cartoon of the writer T. Howard Kelly chased by riding Klansmen. *Movie Weekly* was evidently not unduly worried by this threat, but exploited the popular

interest in the Klan (as exhibitors would also do) and used the Klan to boost its own profile and identity, by standing up strongly to these claims, and writing of its 'crusade against these people.' The magazine recognised that this unofficial, poorly written letter may not have come from the Klan, but *Movie Weekly* (as a representative of the film industry) still used this letter to present itself as a chivalrous victim, describing the Klan as one of many 'antagonistic forces arrayed against the progress of the films.'¹⁵⁴ *Movie Weekly* presented the Klan as an 'avowed enemy,' highlighting the two-way discourse between the film industry and the Klan. The terms of opposition between the Klan and the industry were again outlined, with *Movie Weekly* describing the threatened Kelly in racial terms as a 'fighting Irishman,' while Kelly suggested (not entirely correctly) that the letter writer's 'reason for antagonism to screen players is that he imagines them to be leading excessive lives.'¹⁵⁵

Movie Weekly published an official response from the Pittsburgh Klan in July 1923. The letter written by the Pittsburgh Klan denied any connection with the previous unofficial Klan correspondences, but made no mention at all either of the Taylor murder or of any Klan involvement within Hollywood. The letter instead again outlined the group's concerns about film representation ('This organization is opposed to the mixture of white women and Sheiks'), moving the discussion within the magazine away from the subject of Hollywood and scandal, and towards a discussion of censorship and film morality.¹⁵⁶ Certainly the issue of film representation would appear to be of most significance to the Klan, with the Klan, as it would throughout the 1920s, referring to a few favoured examples (*The Pilgrim* and *Bella Donna*). However, when corresponding directly to film fans (and thus many non-Klan members), the Klan presented the issue of film representation in largely moral terms, and did not directly criticise the Jewish and Catholic influences within the industry. The letter warned again that 'no man, no movie house, no actor and no corporation can insult the Christian religion and get away with

it,' but the letter ostensibly concerned the on-screen representation of race and religion. The emphasis within this letter was different from those published within Klan newspapers, and as the Klan appeared to use this forum to extend its message to non-Klan members, it is perhaps unsurprising that the tone was largely conciliatory. The letter explained that the Klan 'does not oppose the movies- AS SUCH,' and stated at the end that 'we are not antagonistic, but wish to co-operate in the good work you fellows are capable of, if you only wake up.'¹⁵⁷

Movie Weekly could scarcely avoid aligning itself with the Klan's moral stand, and acknowledged that 'it is indeed laudable for the Ku Klux Klan to go on record as being officially opposed to indecency of any kind.' The Klan's moral objections again demanded support from broad sections of society and *Movie Weekly* admitted that 'Right-minded citizens of this country in all levels of life will applaud the order for such a stand.' *Movie Weekly* revealed a willingness to work 'shoulder to shoulder with Ku Kluxers' to produce 'good, clean screen entertainment,' while the Klan claimed that it was 'not antagonistic' and wished to 'co-operate' with the film industry. Yet, how did the Klan and the film industry work in relation to each other during the 1920s? My evidence so far has suggested that both parties fostered an antagonistic relationship during this period, and it seems highly unlikely that the Klan, having constructed the film industry as its antithesis, could work with this apparently Jewish organisation. *Movie Weekly* also acknowledged potential problems in any relationship with the Klan, expressing strong reservations about the Klan's 'attempt to impose its own censorship upon the motion picture industry.' The article recognised the Klan's potential role within the film industry, and presented the Klan's removal of 'the movie production [*The Pilgrim*] of one of our greatest and most popular actors from state to state' as a dangerous precedent; 'Given the range of power which this organization claims for

itself, there is no limitation to be placed upon the influence it might exert as a censorial factor in picturedom.’¹⁵⁸

Movie Weekly may have suggested that the Klan could work alongside the film industry in improving screen entertainment, but it remained completely opposed to the sort of censorship that the Klan seemed to propose in its bannings of *The Pilgrim*. Even as early as 1921, *Motion Picture Magazine* recognised the role that conservative protests were having in introducing censorship, when writing of the ‘cooked up evidence and hysterical screaming’ that was promoting censorship. The writer offered a thinly veiled attack on Klan-like organisations, claiming that these groups demanding censorship appeared ‘with a bible in one hand and a knife in the other ... they meet and whisper.’¹⁵⁹ By 1923, with the protests against *The Pilgrim* and *Bella Donna*, *Movie Weekly* was emphasising the Klan’s potential influence on the film industry, but aside from these isolated bans, how successful was the Klan in directing and enforcing restrictions against the film industry during the 1920s?

Hays, censorship and the Klan

Censorship as a restrictive device may appear to work closely alongside the Klan’s ideals, as *Photoplay* suggested when writing disparagingly in 1922 that ‘censorship is the hooded Ku Klux Klan of art.’¹⁶⁰ However, the Klan initially heavily opposed censorship. In an editorial published in February 1922, *Searchlight* asked, ‘Are we returning to that frame of mind which made witch-burning in old Salem an approved custom?’ The editorial added that ‘censorship is dangerous in the extreme’ suggesting that film censorship is a ‘step in the direction of further curtailments of our liberties.’¹⁶¹ The paper did clarify that its opposition was specifically to ‘politically delegated’ censorship and six months later, *Searchlight* again argued that the ‘appointment of

political censors by several states should be condemned in the strongest terms by the American people.' The Klan distanced itself from the 'hue and cry for censorship' arguing that 'in this free, clean thinking country there is no place for artistic overlords and literary censors.'¹⁶² The Klan's position on censorship was again directed by its religious attitudes. The Klan spoke out against censorship when it trampled on presentations of its own values. For example, *Dawn* referred to the censorship of *The Invisible Empire*, a play positively featuring the Klan, as 'this cruel deed.'¹⁶³ As I have shown, the censorship was presented as a religious attack on a Protestant show and the Klan strongly opposed censorship when it perceived it to be Jewish or Catholic controlled. The Klan subsequently sought Protestant regulation within the film industry.¹⁶⁴

After the protests against *The Pilgrim* and *Bella Donna*, the Klan appeared much more active in supporting industrial regulation and this shift may highlight, in part, the opportunism of the Klan. The Klan once more rearticulated popular debates on film censorship, as a means with which it could attack its racial and religious opponents. For example, when the Klan supported the establishment of the Federal Motion Picture Council of America in January 1925, it redefined the campaign in purely religious terms. *The American Standard* reported the initial meeting under the heading 'Patriots make War on Jew Movies' and used this existing film discourse as an opportunity to condemn its Jewish opponents: 'The poisonous flood of filthy Jewish suggestion, which has been paralyzing the moral sense of America's children, is going to be swept into the ocean, and the rat-like anti-Christians who are responsible for this condition will follow in its wake.'¹⁶⁵ The Klan still opposed official censorship as an 'idea obnoxious to American principles,' but by 1926 the head of the Klan, Dr Evans, recognised the 'strict censorship needed to keep the Jew-controlled stage and movies within even gunshot of decency.'¹⁶⁶ The Klan appeared to use the censorship debates to define itself as a social

guardian, protecting the morals of women and children. *Kourier* outlined the Klan's necessary social role when warning that 'if film houses flash before the family degrading, depraving or disgusting moving pictures there is, likewise, no authority to check them.'¹⁶⁷ As early as 1923, the National Board of Review recognised the influence of the Klan in film discourse, with Turner Jones, the Board's Director of Public Relations, warning that 'there is brewing in Texas one of the worst fights that the industry will ever face, and the leaders will be the ministers, backed by the Ku Klux Klan.'¹⁶⁸

Jones suggested that, in opposing the industry, the Klan would support and align itself with ministers, and certainly the Klan sought legitimacy through its association with established social and religious regulatory groups. *Dawn* in 1923 reported a national congress planned for Washington, at which officials of the Presbyterian Church were seeking 'Federal Censorship of all American motion pictures "at the point of production".' The slogan for this crusade was 'Clean up the Movies!' and the Klan immediately aligned itself with this campaign, reporting that 'The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan has been most active in the fight for cleaner pictures and the members of that organization, as individuals, will aid in the proposed crusade.'¹⁶⁹ *Fiery Cross* also endorsed the establishment of the 'women's committee of the "non theatrical" motion picture company' in 1923, which endeavoured to 'place wholesome and entertaining films before public schools, churches, Young Men's Christian Associations, community centers etc.' The committee explained that by showing religious and geographical pictures, children 'will grow up predisposed against the low-brow, moron type of film.'¹⁷⁰

After 1923, Klan newspapers encouraged local groups to actively respond to film screenings, and Klan groups often supported established reputable campaigns. *The Hawkeye Independent*, self-billed as 'The Klansman's Newspaper' in Des Moines,

Iowa, corresponded with the National Committee for Better Films in 1923. H. J. Mandeville, the editor of the paper explained that 'the paper is waging a constant fight against the indecent motion pictures that infest the picture theatres of Iowa.' He asked for some literature 'that would aid us in intelligently fighting the battle.'¹⁷¹ A few weeks later *Searchlight* published an editorial dismissing the National Board of Review as a 'dummy behind which producers have hidden for years,' but an article in *Fiery Cross* a year later was far more complimentary of the board, noting that 'a great many men, ministers, writers, editors etc., are now serving on these committees and the result has been very gratifying.'¹⁷² Local Klan groups recognised the reputable social and religious figures overseeing and using these committees and, when the Women of the Ku Klux Klan wrote to the Board in 1925 asking for information about the pictures that were due to be shown in Elkhart, Indiana, they explained that 'one of the theatre managers here informed us that you gave this information to churches, etc. who were interested in the matter.' The WKKK again sought to legitimise its work, by associating with this established educative board, as it wrote that 'we [WKKK] appreciate what your board has meant to the public in general and are very eager to co-operate with you in any manner.'¹⁷³

The Klan was active not only in supporting the external regulation of film, but also in enforcing the closure of movie theatres on Sundays. The Nathan Hale chapter of the Klan in Kokomo, Indiana passed resolutions calling on the city council to close local theatres on Sundays. The group explained in a statement that 'as an organization that believes in the tenets of the Christian religion' they wanted this ordinance passed immediately. The campaign helped the Klan to present itself as a legitimate religious group, with *Kokomo Daily Dispatch* reporting this story under the headline 'Klansmen vote to aid churches in movie fight.' The Klan worked alongside the Kokomo Ministerial Association in this campaign, and the prominent Evangelist Bob Jones gave

a sermon at the local Klavern, in which he discussed the closure of Sunday movies and received 'rousing applause.' Further attempts to restrict the presentation of movies on Sundays were reported in the Klan press throughout 1924, with *Fiery Cross* for example, alerting readers to an attempt in New Jersey to reopen theatres on Sundays.¹⁷⁴

The Klan also fought to enforce the closure of theatres on Sundays in Youngstown, Ohio and once more cooperated closely with leading figures from the church. The local Klan, along with a number of local ministers, had publicly supported Charles Scheible's campaign for Mayor in 1923, on the condition that he would enforce the blue laws in the area. When Scheible failed to enforce these laws after his election, Colonel E. A. Watkins, the head of the local Klan called together the ministers and threatened a recall.¹⁷⁵ The under-pressure Mayor finally enforced the blue laws on Sunday January 7 1924, but still allowed movie theatres to operate after 1pm on a Sunday. *Moving Picture World* spoke of the 'Ku Klux Klan political victory' and presented Scheible as a Klan puppet, but ministers still fought for the complete closure of the local theatres.¹⁷⁶ One minister, quoted in *Kourier*, remarked that Scheible 'is a creation of that organization [the Klan] and I cannot see why they should not be called to use their influence in bringing about a better law enforcement in the city.'¹⁷⁷

The Klan's efforts in securing the election of Scheible as Mayor, suggest that the Klan was successful in placing figures, sympathetic to the Klan cause, in influential positions. The Klan supported those figures that it deemed sympathetic to its cause, such as William Chase, a founder member of the aforementioned Federal Motion Picture Council, and a man who often addressed speeches in congress to 'Patriotic Gentile Americans.' The Klan also supported the introduction of Will Hays, a Protestant Republican from the Klan heartland of Indiana, as head of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association of America in 1922. The author and journalist, Edward G. Lowry described Hays as 'the one hundred percent American we have all heard so much

talk about,' adding that he is 'the most characteristic native product' and a 'national institution.' The language used was reminiscent of the Klan, and the group was certainly drawn towards Hays.¹⁷⁸ *Dawn* wrote that 'Will Hays will clean house in the movies, if an awakened, intelligent public opinion gets behind him and stays behind him.' Hays was an outsider regulating the movies, and his policies seemed to work alongside those pushed forward by the Klan.¹⁷⁹

Hays appeared to support the Klan's attack on Paramount in June 1924. Although he did not refer to the Klan directly, his criticisms of Paramount, reported in *Variety* in July 1924, followed on from those recently offered by the Klan. Hays was unhappy with the salacious titles Paramount was using, ordering sixteen of the forty changed. He was particularly critical of *Manhandled*, a film that the Klan had also singled out for criticism. Hays appeared to endorse the Klan message, but, despite their initial enthusiasm for his appointment, the Klan continued to attack film after 1922 and became increasingly critical of Hays. As early as April 1923 an editorial in *Fiery Cross* declared that 'the greatest service that Will Hays could do to mankind' would be to resign and 'declare to the world his impotency and his utter inability to cope with such a powerful and damnable situation.'¹⁸⁰ By February 1925, The Federal Motion Picture Council argued that the 'coming of Will Hays to the films had resulted in no improvement' in the quality of pictures. *The American Standard* now dismissed Hays' appointment as 'merely another Jewish smoke-screen,' complaining that 'President Harding's youthful cabinet minister was bought by the Jews.'¹⁸¹ The Klan now viewed Hays as an established part of the Jewish film industry, and in a subsequent article *The American Standard* criticised 'Will Hays' Jewish group of movie magnates.' The article again referred closely to the work of Henry Ford and his *Dearborn Independent* paper, but now presented Hays not as a manipulated gentile, but rather as a corrupt controlling

force. It suggested that 'Mr. Hays is a figurehead' for the Jewish trust and argued that Jews 'operate through Mr. Hays.'

The Klan's antagonistic attitude towards Hays would suggest that the group exercised little influence over film, and in particular over censorship after 1922, but it is important to consider why the Klan came to oppose Hays. Once more I would suggest that the Klan's criticisms were, in part, religiously motivated. Frank Walsh has recently argued that 'Protestant Ministers constituted the core of Hays' opposition in the 1920s,' with Hays positively embracing the Catholic Church in order to attain support for his work within the industry. Hays recognised the International Federation of Catholic Alumnae and the National Catholic Welfare Conference amongst his most dependable allies, and by aligning his reforms with these Klan opponents, he isolated himself from the Protestant church and the work of the Klan.¹⁸² However, it was also productive for the Klan to criticise Hays, as this allowed the Klan to present itself as a moral minority, continuing to fight the dominant Jewish industry. The Klan justified its own necessary role within society by presenting the industry as a corrupt, Jewish institution, with Hays now positioned as a part of this larger Jewish conspiracy.

Conclusion

The Klan continued to criticise and oppose film, even as it faded as an influential reforming organisation, but the Klan's most volatile involvement within film discourses occurred during 1923/4. During this period, Klan groups protested against *The Pilgrim*, *Bella Donna*, and the Paramount sex comedies. This was a period during which the industry faced huge pressure from reformers, and in which the Klan began making and exhibiting its own films. The Klan continued to criticise film over the next decade, but invariably when considering film representation, the Klan would refer again

to the examples of *The Pilgrim* and *Bella Donna*. These examples allowed for a broader condemnation of the Jewish influences within the industry, and the fact that these same films were repeatedly referenced may suggest that the Klan was less concerned with specific examples of film representation, than with the Jewish and Catholic influences within the industry.¹⁸³

In 1937 when the Klan sued Warners over the use of its patented insignia in *Black Legion*, the case once more confronted the issue of film representation. In 1923, the Klan had recognised the influence of film on social attitudes and sought to control the representation of its ideals, and with its action against *Black Legion*, the Klan again protested against an individual film. For the Klan, no longer the institutional force it had been in the previous decade, the case also offered the possibility of a large financial boost, of free publicity and of legitimacy through the court's response, but the Klan appeared to use the case fundamentally to defend its reputation.¹⁸⁴ In 1937, this was especially significant, as *Black Legion* drew a clear parallel between the Klan and the murderous Black Legion group.

The Black Legion group was originally formed under the title of 'Klan guard' in Ohio in the mid 1920s and was initially presented as an extension of the Klan. The group came to prominence in Michigan a decade later after a series of murders were attributed to the group.¹⁸⁵ For one of these murders- the brutal killing of Charles Poole in 1936- eleven Black Legion members were convicted, and a subsequent grand jury investigation unveiled further damning revelations about the group, which drew comparisons with the Klan.¹⁸⁶ Judge Hartrick, reporting his findings from the Grand Jury investigation, described the Black Legion as a 'Black Klan,' while the State Police Captain in Detroit termed the Black Legion, 'the strong arm agency for the Ku Klux Klan.' Newspapers also emphasised the parallels with the Klan, with the *Port Arthur News*, for example, headlining an article 'Black Legion linked to Klan.'¹⁸⁷ The Klan

was understandably sensitive to such comparisons, especially as it had forbidden Klansmen from joining the Black Legion and had for a long time viewed the group as a threat to its own social position.¹⁸⁸

The Klan therefore sought to redefine itself and distance itself from the negative activities of the Black Legion, and it attempted to achieve this through legal action. The Black Legion also responded to Warners through its attorney Bernard Cruse. Cruse, writing before the Klan began legal proceedings, complained to Warners that the 'picture is far lacking in portraying the Black Legion as it really is.' The Black Legion, like the Klan of the 1920s, criticised the film and sought to control its own representation. Cruse advised Warners that 'If you are interested in producing another picture that would bring the largest box office receipts ever known and portray the Black Legion as it really is, I would be happy to discuss the matter.'¹⁸⁹ Yet the Black Legion did not publicly protest against the film, or launch the organised, national objections to the film, that the Klan had attempted with *The Pilgrim* and *Bella Donna*. The Klan would certainly appear more successful in its actions against *Black Legion*. Although the Klan lost the case over the intricacies of the patent laws, at no point did the court attempt to condemn the Klan or question the Klan's independence from the Legion. The case was not as high profile or as significant as the Congressional hearings fifteen years earlier, but the action did allow the Klan to define itself against the Black Legion, and to rework the recent negative publicity. The Klan once more used criticisms of film representation as a powerful means to present itself to the public.¹⁹⁰

The Black Legion case confirmed once more the Klan's antagonism towards the film industry, but also highlighted that the Klan recognised the power, popularity and influence of film. This dichotomy runs throughout this period, as the Klan condemned but also embraced film. The Klan positively exploited mainstream films such as *Birth* and *The Face at your Window*, and produced films like *The Toll of Justice*, but it also

heavily criticised film and cinema. The Klan justified these criticisms by connecting modernity to religion and immigration, so that the Klan did not condemn modern technology or film as such, but rather opposed the religious influences that it perceived were controlling the film industry. The Klan attacked individual cinemas, films and, to a lesser extent, the broader concept of Hollywood, as it adapted existing fears and concerns about film morality in order to condemn the foreign influences within America.

The Klan's disputes with the film industry offer insights into the reputation and social positioning of the Klan (as a moral guardian) and on the role of film in modern society. It also reveals the pressures that the film industry faced even after the introduction of Will Hays in 1922. I have outlined some of the ways in which the industry responded to these criticisms, but in the next chapter I will consider how these pressures and censorial demands impacted on the films produced by the industry. Were producers able to respond to the Klan on film, or did industrial demands and patriotic discourse restrict the presentations of the group during the 1920s? The Klan was actively involved in protesting against individual films, in directing criticisms against on screen representation, and in presenting the industry as a foreign treat, so how in turn did the industry present the Klan?

¹ 'Klan sues Warner's on 'Legion' Emblem', *The Hollywood Reporter* (11/8/37), 2.

² 'Kluxers sue WB on 'Black Legion' Insignia', *Variety* (18/8/37).

³ All of the references to the *Black Legion* case come from The Warner Bros. archives at the University of Southern California. The first of these quotes comes from a letter from Morris Ebenstein to Roy Obringer (30/8/37), while the other quotes come from an earlier letter from Ebenstein to Obringer, dated 27/8/37.

⁴ 'Letter from Captain Ramsay to Warner Bros. Motion Picture Co.' (22/8/37). Capt. Ramsay was at this time travelling the country as publicity officer for the Clyde Beatty Circus. He had carried out many investigations on the Klan, and hoped to expose the Klan by proving that the film 'did not misrepresent their [Klan] line of activity'. Ultimately Warners decided that his evidence was not substantial enough.

⁵ 'The Covered Wagon Days in Texas', *Kourier* (9/25), 11-16. This was a typically romantic piece written by Dr. J. B. Cranfill.

⁶ Guy B. Johnson, 'A Sociological Interpretation of the New Ku Klux Movement,' *Social Forces* 1 (May, 1923), 440-45. This article is reprinted in *The Sociology of Race Relations* edited by Thomas F. Pettigrew (New York: Free Press, 1980).

⁷ 'The Covered Wagon Days in Texas', *Kourier* (9/25), 11-16.

⁸ Kathleen Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (University of California Press, 1991), 85-86.

⁹ Henry Goldschmidt and Elizabeth McAlister eds., *Race, Nation and Religion in the Americas* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 6.

¹⁰ The distinction needs to be made here between 'Cinema' and 'the cinema'. I am not assessing here how Klan groups opposed 'cinema' and all that surrounds film, it's fans and stars, but rather how the group opposed the cinema as a social space, as a place of exhibition. Grieveson (2001, p.73) makes the distinction between the 'policing of the safety of the public space to the policing of the morality of representations.' These terms ('public space' and 'morality of representations') are useful in further clarifying this distinction.

¹¹ Alma White, *The Ku Klux Klan in Prophecy* (Zarephath, New Jersey, 1925), 53. 'The Great Jewish syndicates, the rulers and promoters of the motion picture industry, are striking death-blows to the morals of society and to American traditions and principles. There is no greater menace to the youth of the country than the "movies" with their immoral films and evil influences.' White, like the Klan press, emphasised the perceived Jewish control of the industry and highlighted the negative influence of these films on 'the youth of the country.'

¹² 'An Educated Citizenship', *Kourier* (5/25), 22-24. The piece is a reprinted address originally offered by R.E.L. Saner of Texas, an ex president of the American Bar association. *Kourier* often reprinted addresses from non-Klan publications, in order to illustrate how their sentiments were supported by these non-Klan figures. The tale of children stealing in order to go to the cinema was told in *Imperial Night Hawk* (1/10/24), 2.

¹³ Bishop Alma White complained in 1925 of the 'movies, dance-halls, sweat shops, department stores and innumerable other places, including the white slave dens, where the iron rod of the Hebrew is wielded.' See Alma White, *The Ku Klux Klan in Prophecy* (Zarephath, New Jersey, 1925), 53.

¹⁴ '300 Initiates Accept Vows of Klan Auxiliary', *Kokomo Daily Dispatch*. 'Speaker Defines Klan in Address', *Kokomo Daily Dispatch* (11/8/23), 1. *The American Standard* explained its objections to film in similar terms in 1925: 'the evil influence of present day photoplays is not simply because they are motion pictures, but because of the way in which they are used by protocol Jews and their aids and associates, the Roman Catholics.' See 'U.S. Begins Exposure of Jewish Movie Trust', *American Standard* (15/11/25), 519.

¹⁵ *Dawn*, (9/6/23), 13. The Klan presented itself as a voiceless minority, with *Dawn* reporting that the theatre owner could lose his license if he let the Klan use his theatre.

¹⁶ *Official Monthly Bulletin of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan* issued by the Realm of Mississippi (April 1927). This piece concerned a stage performance, but once more the representation is blamed on the Jewish exhibitors. 'Ohio Exhibitor Charges Klan with Boycotting his Theatre', *Moving Picture World* (22/3/24), 294.

¹⁷ *Kourier* (10/27), 29.

¹⁸ A few years later when *Kourier* attacked the New York Theatre, it compared it to the Cloaca Maxima, 'the huge sewer of ancient Rome - a gas mask is necessary if you remain there and a thorough fumigation when you come out. See 'Jewish Pictures Threaten Youth: Filthy Shows are Propaganda for Communism', *Kourier* (9/33), 11.

¹⁹ Lee Grieveson (2004) suggests that concerns and reforms around cinema in 1906-7 were fuelled by the 'politics of domesticity' (p.91), with feminine organisations, such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) promoting these discourses. Klan groups perpetuate and embrace these concerns around the Cinema building during the 1920s.

²⁰ Steven J. Ross, *Working Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (Princeton University Press, 1998), 21-23. Ross talks more specifically of earlier film, with the quotation referring specifically to the Alhambra theatre in Massachusetts in 1912. Reformers in the 1920s expressed these concerns about mixed audiences, yet Klan literature based its criticisms on the perceived Jewish control of the theatres.

²¹ Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity; Early Sensational Cinema and its Contexts* (Columbia University Press, 2001), 295.

²² *Fiery Cross*, (14/3/24). *Noblesville Daily Ledger*, (24/4/24), 6.

²³ 'Forum Broadcasting Station', *Kourier* (2/28), 10-12. The contrast was made with the work of the 'Romanized press and some Jewish publications' as the Klan talked of protecting this station, which 'Protestants have constructed'

²⁴ 'A Vehicle of 100% Americanism', *Dawn* (13/10/23). A further article in *Dawn* (24/11/23, p.7) pictured a car draped in the American Flag, which was used to transport important figures to parades; 'The car is painted red, white and blue and carries an electrically lighted cross.' Klansmen would drive in packs in their cars to parade, using the car, almost as a replacement for horses, as part of the spectacle. The Klan also condemned what it perceived as a Jewish obsession with money making, yet created a massive money making organisation itself. The Klan sold products such as Klean Kut Kid dolls, but again differentiated itself from the Jewish salesmen, by stating on an advert for the 'rubber inflated doll' that '100% Agents wanted'. See *Dawn* (15/12/23), 15.

²⁵ 'Jew Movies a Moral Menace to America', *American Standard* (15/4/25), 173. The support and administration of the prohibition laws was of huge importance to the Klan during the 1920s, and this established Klan target was now aligned with the movie industry

²⁶ 'A Lesson for the Negro and the Jew', *Dawn* (12/5/23), 11. The article stated; 'Inherent characteristics of the Jew and the Negro seem to make it difficult, if not impossible for them to measure up for certain standards or qualities that are the heritage of the typical American of white, gentile, native stock. These qualities are not based upon religious issues, but are attributable to ethnological differences, hereditary influences, dissimilar social customs, and inherited tendencies that distinguish one people from another.'

²⁷ Eugene Levy, "'Is the Jew a White Man?': Press Reaction to the Leo Frank Case, 1913-1915', *Phylon*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (2nd Quarter, 1974), 213. Levy suggested that the central question was 'Did Frank, a Jew, kill a Christian girl, or did Conley, a black man, kill a white girl?' I would suggest that Frank's whiteness was significant in the public reaction against him. Frank, as a white Jew, represented a hidden, socially mobile threat, in contrast with the visible, largely powerless black African American.

²⁸ See Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (Routledge, 1991).

²⁹ See for example *Dawn* (21/4/23 and 2/6/23). 'Your daughter, sister or sweetheart may be the next victim of such a horror.' The book is 'a true story by ex-nun Helen Jackson, author and victim.' *The Muncie Post Democrat*, an anti Klan paper also reported speeches delivered by this 'fake nun.' See 'Weak-minded of Logansport turn out to hear Helen Jackson', *Post Democrat* (14/11/24), 1.

³⁰ Henry Goldschmidt and Elizabeth McAlister eds., *Race, Nation and Religion in the Americas* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 6.

³¹ 'The Covered Wagon Days in Texas', *Kourier* (9/25), 11-16. Even Ross (1998, p.205) who views film in relation to class, presents modern society in religious terms; 'Working-class men and women preferred the allures of the new consumer ethos to the old Protestant work ethic that stressed the importance of frugality, self denial, and deferred gratification.'

³² 'Negroes and Religion', *Dawn* (14/4/23).

³³ The parades were reported by Lantzer, with the quotes originally coming from *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (2/7/23). 'Go to Church Sunday' featured each week in *Dawn*; 'Klansmen! We urge you to attend church this and every Sunday. It will give you new inspirations which will help you over the hard week of work.'

³⁴ 'What Would Jesus Say?', *Dawn* (16/12/22), 5.

³⁵ *Dawn* (24/3/23), 5.

³⁶ 'Screen Ridicule of Protestant Ministry', *Imperial Night Hawk*, (4/4/23), 3.

³⁷ *Imperial Night Hawk*, (9/5/23). 'Kansas Klan bars Chaplin', *Searchlight* (23/6/23), 2. 'Klans Determined to Clean Up the Movies', *Imperial Night Hawk* (6/6/23).

³⁸ *Moving Picture World* (19/5/23), 221.

³⁹ 'Movie Weekly Writer Receives Official Communication from Ku Klux Klan', *Movie Weekly* (14/7/23), 4. *The Port Arthur News* appeared unimpressed with these cuts, reporting the story in Mason City under the heading 'Charlie too funny: Censors slash film' (14/4/23), 8. The censorship of Chaplin was again presented as a restricting, conservative attack on comedy and modern fun. The incident was also reported in *Variety* (12/4/23), 23.

⁴⁰ 'Straight from the Shoulder', *Moving Picture World* (14/7/23)

⁴¹ 'Ridiculing Protestant', *Searchlight* (6/1/23), 2. The letter was sent from Comanche, Oklahoma on 27/12/22. It began; 'It is a well known fact that when a Protestant minister is shown in any manner on the screen, it is always in a ridiculous manner, and that if a Catholic priest or rabbi is shown it is in a dignified manner.' The letter enclosed a clipping of Chaplin in his forthcoming role and urged other readers to protest and 'relegate him [Chaplin] along with Fatty.' A week later, *Searchlight* (13/1/23, p.2) asked 'Did you ever see a priest of the Catholic church, or a rabbi, portrayed in a comic moving picture?'

⁴² 'A Lesson for the Negro and the Jew', *Dawn* (12/5/23). *Imperial Night Hawk*, (6/6/23). *Movie Weekly* (14/7/23), 4.

⁴³ 'Screen Ridicule of Protestant Ministry', *Imperial Night Hawk* (4/4/23), 3.

⁴⁴ 'Ridiculing Protestants', *Searchlight* (13/1/23), 2. The letter on which this article appeared to be based in *Searchlight* (6/1/23) had added that 'any attempt to show a Catholic priest in a ridiculous manner would call such a protest from howling Rome through the Roman Jew controlled press that the repetition would not be made very many times.'

⁴⁵ 'Chas. Chaplin film is banned in S.C.', *The Fiery Cross* (11/5/23), 8. The report also appeared in *Searchlight* (19/5/23, p.4), under the headline 'South Carolina Klansmen stop crowning insult to Protestantism.'

⁴⁶ 'Klansman halt Chaplin film at Walla Walla', *Searchlight* (14/4/23). Also referenced in Carr (2001), 70. See also "'The Pilgrim' raises protest on West Coast', *Fiery Cross* (13/4/23), 1.

⁴⁷ "'The Pilgrim' Prevented from Showing', *Searchlight* (5/5/23), 2.

⁴⁸ *Imperial Night Hawk*, (6/6/23). David Robinson in *Chaplin: His Life and Art* (1985, Penguin edition 2001, p.160) recalls Chaplin's admiration for Jewish people, and quotes Chaplin from 1915 when asked if he was a Jew; 'I have not had that good fortune'. He presents Chaplin as a clear admirer ('All great geniuses have Jewish blood in them'), who repeatedly refused to dismiss the labels thrown at him. Chaplin's engagement to Negri was announced in January 1923, shortly before the release of *The Pilgrim*, and at a point when the Klan press was also attacking Negri's films.

⁴⁹ 'Movie Weekly Writer Receives Official Communication from Ku Klux Klan', *Movie Weekly* (14/7/23), 4.

⁵⁰ 'A Lesson for the Negro and the Jew', *Dawn* (12/5/23). When *The American Standard* complained in 1925 that 'the actors and actresses who are held up as exemplars for young Americans are, in most cases, Jews and Roman Catholics,' it again suggested that the success of these foreign stars was largely due to the producers and exhibitors. The article emphasised that 'the greatest advertising is given, not to Americans, but to Aliens and Romanists, such as Pola Negri, Rudolfo Valentino, Ramon Navarro, Nita Naldi, etc., etc.' The article highlighted that that 'Jews and Roman Catholics own 95 per cent of the big producing and distributing companies.' See 'Jew Movies a Moral Menace to America', *American Standard* (15/4/25), 173.

⁵¹ 'Protestants should rally and help "movies" to be properly regulated', *Searchlight* (2/6/23), 4. The article complained that the Catholic Church is always 'shown in a respectful light' and that drunken Priests are always depicted as Protestants.

⁵² 'Official Censoring', *Dawn* (13/10/23), 10. The example of *The Pilgrim* was continually quoted within the Klan press, and even in 1927 the Klan in Mississippi was still complaining that on screen 'Protestant ministers have been used to discredit not only their calling but the entire church.' *Official Monthly Bulletin of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan* issued by the Realm of Mississippi (5/5/27).

⁵³ 'Movie Propaganda is Beyond Real Ideas: Foreign Scenes Favored', *Searchlight* (23/3/24), 7. The article asked 'When are we going to sit up and take notice, rub our eyes and get wide awake to the amount of propaganda that is taking place right before our very eyes?'

⁵⁴ 'Hierarchy's Use of Movies for Propaganda Protested', *Ohio Fiery Cross* (2/5/24), 8. The article also appeared in *Searchlight* (26/4/24, p.1) under the heading 'Florida Klansmen in Protest over Movie Propaganda.'

⁵⁵ *Dawn*, (12/5/23). 'Movies Broadcast Foreign Propaganda', *Imperial Night Hawk* (25/6/24) 2. The writer complained that it is always the 'foreign church, the foreign idea of religion' shown on screen.

⁵⁶ 'Movies Broadcast Foreign Propaganda', *Imperial Night Hawk* (25/6/24), 2.

⁵⁷ 'What can I do?', *Kourier*, (10/27).

⁵⁸ 'How the Commercialized Movies are Undermining Morals in America', *Imperial Night Hawk* (1/10/24), 2. This article originally featured in another publication, as the Klan press often reprinted sermons or existing articles that displayed Klan sentiments. Once more this shows the Klan, not as a radically new group, but as reformers adopting existing concerns.

⁵⁹ The protests also provided publicity for the films that the Klan sought to condemn. For example, *Moving Picture World* (9/6/23, p.473) recognised that the public condemnation of *The Pilgrim* was 'instrumental in selling the Chaplin film to unusual business' in Marseilles, Illinois. The exhibitor J. M. Hartford exploited the valuable free publicity, while *Moving Picture World* continued to fan the interest in the film, provoked by the Klan discourse. The paper suggested that a sum of money should be donated to charity on behalf of any minister who could prove logically that *The Pilgrim* was an 'insult to the cloth.'

⁶⁰ *Imperial Night Hawk*, (19/3/23), 3, and (9/4/23, p.2). Such messages can be found regularly in the paper.

⁶¹ 'A Lesson for the Negro and the Jew', *Dawn* (12/5/23). Hiram Evans took over the leadership of the Klan in 1922.

⁶² 'Catholic Propaganda in Movie Organization', *Dawn* (27/10/23), 21. This exact story originally featured in *Imperial Night Hawk* (10/10/23, p.4) under the title 'Catholic Propaganda clutches Movies'.

⁶³ "'Silent" Propaganda', *Fiery Cross* (26/10/23), 4.

⁶⁴ 'Hierarchy's Use of Movies for Propaganda Protested', *Ohio Fiery Cross* (2/5/24), 8. The article also complained about a radio lecture in New York about the film. The paper urged action, writing 'Let Klansmen heap their criticisms on every picture in which it is sought to put this sort of stuff over and see how quickly the producers will change their tactics when they begin to get the effect of the criticism and loss of business at the box office.'

⁶⁵ 'Al and the Movies', *Searchlight* (31/5/24), 3. The 'Al' in the title refers to governor Al Smith, a prominent Catholic and a long-standing Klan target, who according to *Searchlight* 'demands that the New York legislature repeal the censorship law.'

⁶⁶ 'Romanizing the Theatrical World goes on Merrily', *Searchlight* (23/8/24), 3. 'Rome at Hollywood', *West Texas Fiery Cross*. *Searchlight* concluded with a warning, arguing that as long as a 'gullible public... attend theatrical performances where Protestant ministers are lampooned', Catholic propaganda will continue to spread across the country.

⁶⁷ 'Unable to Interest Picture Industry', *Imperial Night Hawk* (28/5/24), 6. A piece in *Imperial Night Hawk* (1/8/23, p.7) entitled 'Jews Control Bolshevik Russia and are Aiding Extension of Communism' showed how the Klan carefully linked 'the Jew' to the Bolshevik threat and the Russian Revolution through figures like Marx. The report on *The Fifth Year in Russia* appeared under the heading 'Russian Film Cancelled' in *Indianapolis News* (25/1/24). The film was

sponsored by 'The Friends of Soviet Russia' and protests also came from Disabled American Veterans and The Veterans of Foreign Wars.

⁶⁸ Schenck was a highly influential producer, who produced many of Fatty Arbuckle's films and would later co-found 20th Century Fox.

⁶⁹ 'Reds Also Know Value of Movies', *Searchlight* (31/5/24), 6. See also 'Bolshevist Agents Try to Penetrate Moving Picture Industry by Spreading Red Propaganda in United States', *Searchlight* (7/6/24), 7. This article also appeared in *Youngstown Citizen* (14/6/24), under the heading 'Unable to Interest the Film Makers.'

⁷⁰ *Kourier* urged the Klan to take action against 'Romanist and Anti-American Propaganda' on an Iowa radio station, WNAX, in 1929. The article stated that 'if this station is going to praise the Roman Catholics and fling nasty remarks at Protestantism and Protestant men, it is time we should make ourselves known. Therefore I am requesting that each Klansman and Klanswoman in the state write to this station, and protest.' The Klan once more urged direct action, proclaiming 'Get busy people, and let WNAX know we don't appreciate such slurs.' See 'Anti-American radios', *Kourier* (5/29), 19.

⁷¹ 'Jew-Jesuit Propaganda in "The Miracle"', *American Standard* (1/8/24), 17-19. Catholics, presented as un-American because they owed allegiance to a foreign power (the Pope), became prominent Klan targets, particularly in political life.

⁷² 'Roman Propaganda Flows Freely in U.S.', *Fiery Cross* (28/3/24), 6.

⁷³ 'Theatre-goers are Awakened', *Fiery Cross* (28/11/24), 7. The article also noted that attendances for "Simon called Peter", another piece of 'Roman Catholic propaganda' had fallen after *The Fiery Cross* had alerted Protestant playgoers to the content of the play. 'Roman Propaganda Flows Freely in U.S.', *Fiery Cross* (28/3/24), 6.

⁷⁴ 'Propaganda in Theatres', *Dawn* (1/12/23), 14. *Dawn* complained of two plays. One depicted 'a Protestant minister, a missionary who is portrayed in the odious role of a rapist', while the other addressed a Catholic Priest, who falls passionately in love with a gypsy girl. Despite being based on a popular novel, the Catholic character was cut from the stage version 'in order not to wound the religious feelings of a considerable part of the audience', yet the other play continued unaffected. The paper again presented a sense of religious persecution.

⁷⁵ 'Jew Movies a Moral Menace', *American Standard* (15/4/25), 173. Although the Klan often presented a collective Jewish and Catholic threat, Jewish and Catholic figures sought to differentiate themselves from one another, defensively presenting each other as a moral danger. This is highlighted in an article featured in *Dawn* in 1923 (21/7/23, p.12) entitled 'Jew Calls his Brethren to Fight Catholic Control', in which the Jewish writer blamed Catholic influence in the film industry for the 'insidious lowering of moral and religious standards in this country. The piece originally featured in *The Fellowship Forum*.

⁷⁶ The advert in *Dawn* (6/1/23) claimed that this 'was the most talked about play in America', yet although the play received extensive coverage in the Chicago based *Dawn*, there was no mention of the play in other Klan papers. The extensive review 'Best Show in Town' also appeared on 6/1/23.

⁷⁷ *Dawn*, (27/1/23). This review was written by 'Dr. John H. Williamson, B. D. D. D. Former Law Enforcement Commissioner.' The Klan's obsession with status is constantly apparent in its papers and publicity materials. The desire for legitimacy can be seen, with the Klan repeatedly quoting doctors and prominent social figures.

⁷⁸ When a Klan-supported radio broadcast by the Fellowship Forum was halted in 1928 after someone cut the antenna cable, the Klan presented this vandalism as a deliberate religiously motivated attack on the 'national voice for Protestant fraternal America.' *Kourier* talked of the need to protect this station 'which Protestants have constructed', outlining emphatically that 'it is going to be worth any man's life to get caught there at mischief in the future if bulldogs, revolvers, rifles and machine guns can stop him and he will be shown no quarter whatsoever.' See *Kourier*, (2/28), 10-12.

⁷⁹ 'Chicago Citizens See Rabid Discrimination in Negro, Catholic Ban on "Birth of a Nation"', *Dawn* (9/2/23). 10-11. When writing about Jesus, as shown earlier, *Dawn* displayed the Klan as the victim rather than supporter of the mob. See 'What Would Jesus Say?', *Dawn* (16/12/22), 5.

⁸⁰ 'Propaganda in Theatres', *Dawn* (1/12/23). *Dawn*, (9/2/23). This sense of injustice and fostered opposition is replayed in the Klan press. *Dawn* wrote under the heading 'It makes a difference' that 'while the *Literary Digest* reviewed the slanderous attacks on the Ku Klux Klan by the Jew-and-Catholic-owned and controlled press, the *Catholic World* and other Catholic Periodicals applauded. But when the same publication saw fit to print a smattering of comment from the pro-Klan periodicals, the Catholic Press sends up a wail.'

⁸¹ *Dawn*, (6/1/23).

⁸² 'Jew Movies Urging Sex Vice: Rome and Judah at Work to Pollute Young America', *American Standard* (1/7/24), 5-6.

⁸³ 'Memphis Klansmen Protest', *Searchlight* (5/5/23), 2. *Moving Picture World* (2/6/23), 384. The manager of the theatre, John F. Miller, decided to show the film but was concerned enough to hire officers and secret service men to control any potential trouble. The advertisements certainly did not have the desired effect for the Klan, with reports confirming that 'the open opposition of the local Klan resulted in capacity business for the run.' The paper recognised the inevitable conflict between the ultra-conservative Klan and the perceived recklessness of modern film, when writing that 'The Ku Klux Klan has at last invaded the precinct of motion picture censors.'

⁸⁴ 'Bella Donna-Bah!', *Fiery Cross* (27/4/23), 4.

⁸⁵ 'A Lesson for the Negro and the Jew', *Dawn* (12/5/23). *Fiery Cross* (27/4/23), 4.

⁸⁶ Glenda Frank, 'Tempest in Black and White: The 1924 Première of Eugene O' Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings*', *Resources for American Literary Study* 26.1 (2000), 79, 86. According to Stephen Black, O' Neill responded by scribbling "Go Fuck Yourself" at the bottom of the death threat and sending it back to the Klan leader who had sent it. See Stephen Black. *Eugene O' Neill: Beyond Mourning and Tragedy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 301. 'Art Triumphs over Color: O'Neill's New Drama is Played Without Causing a Race Riot', *Evening State Journal and Lincoln Daily News* (16/5/24), 1.

⁸⁷ 'New Inter-Racial Drama Should be Run Out of U.S.', *Searchlight* (22/3/24), 1. The play was also condemned in an editorial within *Fiery Cross*, with the Klan again using the issue of on screen representation to present itself as a misrepresented, victimised underdog opposing powerful industrial forces. The editorial complained that any man 'who raises a voice of protest will immediately be accused of "creating race prejudice" and suspected of being a Klansmen.' See 'Shieks, Art and Uplift', *Fiery Cross* (28/2/24), 4. These protests are also mentioned in Kathleen Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (University of California Press, 1991), 87.

⁸⁸ 'Movie Weekly Writer Receives Official Communication from Ku Klux Klan', *Movie Weekly* (14/7/23), 4. Vamp characters were often associated with the poodle dog, which came to represent European exoticism during the 1920s. Although the Poodle arrived in America from Europe around the 1880s, it still appeared as a rare, luxurious imported creature, increasingly associated with the modern film stars. Barbara Allen Woods, 'The Devil in Dog Form', *Western Folklore*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Oct., 1954), 229-235, suggests that the poodle also has close literary association with the devil, most notably in Goethe's *Faust*, where Mephisto is introduced in the form of a Black Poodle.

⁸⁹ The Klan press repeatedly attacked 'the flapper', asking as early as March 1922 whether her emergence is a 'sign of increasing degeneracy among the modern woman?' *Searchlight* asked if the 'manhood of this day... can continue to entertain the same regard and respect the same gallantry as of old, if its womankind is to cheapen itself by such practices?' See 'Anent the Flapper', *Searchlight* (18/3/22), 4.

⁹⁰ 'A Lesson for the Negro and the Jew', *Dawn* (12/5/23).

⁹¹ *Fiery Cross* (27/4/23), 4.

⁹² '300 Initiates Accept Vows of Klan Auxiliary', *Kokomo Daily Dispatch*, 1.

⁹³ These quotes are all taken from 'Paramount's Titles and Matter viscously Attacked in Pamphlet', *Variety* (9/7/24), 17. Brownlow (1990) offers a brief reference to this pamphlet, seeing it as a 'Ku Klux Klan stunt.'

⁹⁴ 'Jew Movies Urging Sex Vice: Rome and Judah at Work to Pollute Young America', *American Standard* (1/7/24), 5-6. The author, Peter B. Kyne, heavily criticised the film industry

in 1924. *Searchlight* quoted him as saying, 'Those who control the pictures do not want good, clean, wholesome stories.' See *Searchlight* (24/3/23), 2.

⁹⁵ *Kourier* (5/25), 22-24.

⁹⁶ For example see 'Charlie too Funny: Censors slash Film', *The Port Arthur News* (14/4/23), 8 and 'Pastors' Protest Fails to stop Chaplin film', *The Constitution*, Atlanta (13/4/23), 3.

⁹⁷ 'Movies Endanger Morals of Youth', *The New York Times* (23/1/21). 'Censor Concerns', *The New York Times* (2/5/21).

⁹⁸ 'How the Commercialized Movies are Undermining Morals in America', *Imperial Night Hawk*, (1/10/24), 2.

⁹⁹ 'Moving Pictures Responsible for Much Immorality: Counselor of New York Civic League Declares that Moving Pictures Need Stricter Censorship', *Searchlight* (12/7/24), 7.

¹⁰⁰ '8 Millions go to Theaters Daily', *Searchlight* (26/4/24), 2. 'The Movies', *Searchlight* (16/6/23), 2. I will show in chapter four how the Klan utilised film itself during the 1920s.

¹⁰¹ 'Just a Wish', *Searchlight* (11/11/22), 4. The editorial added that 'we wish to have our children's rights protected in motion picture palaces as rigidly as they ought to be in factories.' Despite the implications of this quotation, the concern was again more specifically with on screen representation than with the cinema building.

¹⁰² 'Edison Urges Movie Men to Curb Greed', *Fiery Cross* (7/3/24), 6.

¹⁰³ 'Patriots make War on Jew Movies', *The American Standard* (1/2/25), 54.

¹⁰⁴ Curiously *Searchlight* published an extensive advertisement for Paramount in May 1924, which stated 'If it's a Paramount picture, it's the best show in town.' This was very similar to the adverts subsequently criticised by the Klan, with their lines including, 'If the box office says Paramount, all further questions are wasted breath', and 'The name in motion pictures – the standard, guaranteeing the finest screen art, the foremost direction, acting, presentation, is Paramount.' *Searchlight* (6/5/24), 5.

¹⁰⁵ 'Jews Resent Slander', *Variety* (17/12/20), 3. This referred particularly to the comments of Dr Crafts, the head of the Sunday Blue Laws movement, and founder of the International Reform bureau, who had claimed that 'unchristian Jews' controlled the picture industry.

¹⁰⁶ 'Jewish Supremacy in Motion Picture World', *Dearborn Independent* (19/2/21). The language used throughout *Dearborn* was subsequently evoked in Klan literature. The paper, as with Klan literature, targeted the collective idea of 'the Jew' rather than individual Jews. When Ford received some criticism in the press in 1920, his response appeared a pre-cursor to popular Klan paranoia, as he complained that 'The invisible government got at its work.'

¹⁰⁷ The second part in this series was entitled 'The Producer, the Distributor, the Exhibitor', *Dearborn Independent* (5/11/21, vol.22, no.2), 6. The article outlined the Jewish influence within the industry, analysing the careers of Jesse Lasky and Adolph Zukor, and presenting both as ruthless businessmen, defined by their race: 'A gentile has no chance to advance in his [Zukor] organisation.' Ford's plants were also reported to contain signs claiming 'Jews produce filthy movies.'

¹⁰⁸ Ford, as a symbol of industry, of new wealth and class movement emphasised that the perceived problems with modern America were triggered not by industry, class or urbanization but specifically by race and religion. Although Ford targeted and criticised Jews, he often supported African-Americans, with Lacey writing that 'Ford's black employment policy was genuinely ahead of its time'. Ford's shift in target was to a large extent shared by the Klan. See Robert Lacey, *Ford: The Men and his Machine* (Heinemann: London, 1986), 223, 219, 214. Ford also made movies himself, recognising that the best form of publicity is 'via pictures', and confronted the Jewish industry as the Klan would later attempt to do with their propaganda films, such as *The Toll of Justice*. See Lee Grieveson, 'Watching Henry Skate: On *Detroit, Ruins of a City*', accessed on 10/9/06 from www.mchanan.dial.pipex.com/detroit/

¹⁰⁹ The Klan may appear the perfect outlet for Ford's anti-Semitic ideology. Upton Sinclair's 1937 novel *The Flivver King* (Phaedra Inc.: New York, 1937, 73-76) suggested at a close relationship between the values of the Klan and Henry Ford. In Sinclair's novel, Abner Shutt, a loyal Ford worker, subscribes to his boss' paper and absorbs all of Ford's ideals. Schutt is approached by the Klan, who got his name from the subscription list of the *Dearborn Independent*. *Dearborn Independent* (vol. 22, No.2, 5/11/21, p. 2.) discussed its attitude

towards the Klan in 1921, and although it suggested that the Klan's 'secrecy policy [was] a mistake', the paper appeared largely sympathetic towards the group. The article recognised the shared problems to which both *Dearborn Independent* and the Klan were responding, writing that 'these movements, when they are spontaneous and virile, are natural reactions to the abused of their times.' The anti-Klan paper, *Tolerance* also recognised the close parallels between Ford and the Klan in a series of articles. See 'Ford Backs Ku Klux, Jews charge' (17/6/23, p.8). 'Henry Ford denies he's a Kluxer' (24/6/23, p.7). 'Henry Ford and the Ku Klux Klan' (8/7/23, p.2), "'History is Bunk"- Henry Ford' (5/8/23). Although the Klan newspaper *Dawn* (12/5/23) heavily criticised Ford for sympathising with Catholics in his quest for political power, he was regularly quoted in *Kourier*, with the paper supporting his views on prohibition (10/25), 10. *Kourier* (10/24) quoted the *Atlanta Georgian*, which described him as 'the most remarkable man in the most remarkable country in the world', as the Klan praised his attempts to 'keep this country American.'

¹¹⁰ *Variety*, (9/7/24), 17. The article criticised the 'white slave dealers [who care] care not how many homes they break or lives they crush. With them it is a case of gold, morning, noon, and night- anything for gold.' Richard Maltby also recognised that concerns over the cinema as a social space were related to discourses about white slavery during the teens. Maltby argued that 'in the rhetoric of the anti-prostitution campaign, the movie theatre was a 'similar place' to the dance hall as a site for the enactment of the recurrent nativist fantasy of white slavery.' See Maltby, 'The Social Evil, The Moral Order and The Melodramatic Imagination, 1890-1915', from *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen*, edited by Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook, and Christine Gledhill (London, BFI, 1994), 216.

¹¹¹ 'Jewish Pictures Threaten Youth', *Kourier* (9/33), 9-11.

¹¹² 'Paramount's Titles and Matter Viscously Attacked in Pamphlet', *Variety* (9/7/24), 17.

¹¹³ 'Sex and Society', *Kourier* (10/26), 21-23. Written by 'A Klan Giant, who is also a minister.' When Dr Evans spoke against propaganda on screen, he also saw the problem as one of control; 'it is time to stop Jews and Romanists and Italians and all the rest from telling us what Americanism is and what it should be.' *Kourier*, (12/26), 7.

¹¹⁴ 'An Educated Citizenship', *Kourier* (5/25), 22-24.

¹¹⁵ These cartoons can also be found in Bishop Alma White, *Heroes of the Fiery Cross* (Pillar of Fire, 1928), 37, 74. Both cartoons are credited to Rev. Branford Clarke, a minister with the 'Pillar of Fire' movement. White herself was 'probably the most active and prolific fundamentalist minister of the 1920s' according to Wade (1987), 180. She established 49 branches of her Pillar of Fire churches, set up 2 radio stations, founded 3 colleges, edited six magazines, and wrote over 35 books.

¹¹⁶ 'Jewish Pictures Threaten Youth', *Kourier* (9/33), 9-11.

¹¹⁷ Steven Ross in 'Unknown Hollywood' from *History Today* Volume 40 (April 1990, p.41), qualifies 'Hollywood' as 'a term I use loosely to describe American movie production in general, not simply films made in Los Angeles.' While I too am not using Hollywood in a geographical sense, I am particularly interested in how the term came to represent more than film production, but actually a lifestyle and, more specifically, film excess. As with the Klan, it is this artificially created identity that is important. It may not be an accurate or fair term to describe the massively diverse industry, but it is within these monolithic generic boundaries that the debates of the twenties take place, as the 'Klan' positions itself very publicly against 'Hollywood', 'film', and 'the cinema building.'

¹¹⁸ Richard DeCordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (2001), 120. The reference comes from 1920. 'Marriages are not made in Heaven', *Movie Weekly* (16/2/24), 9. 'What evil influence wrecks the Happy Homes of Moviedom?', *Movie Weekly* (19/4/24), 8-9.

¹¹⁹ David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (Duke University Press, 1987), 122. Dr Evans' quotes come from *Kourier* (3/27), 8.

¹²⁰ Ruth Waterbury, 'Don't go to Hollywood', *Photoplay* (1924). Reprinted in *The Movies in our Midst*, ed. by Gerald Mast (1982), 215. 'No Girl Should Come to Hollywood Without Money Warns Mary Pickford', *Movie Weekly* (16/2/24), 6-7. 'Should a Girl be Chaperoned in

Hollywood?', *Movie Weekly* (22/3/24). 'Mary Pickford gives tip to movie struck', *Fiery Cross* (7/12/23), 4.

¹²¹ An advert for Arbuckle, a few months before the scandal, featured a smiling Arbuckle with nine playful girls looking down at him. The film was called *The Life of the Party*. It took very little imagination for outraged reformers to reassess his persona in light of the events of September 1921, and present this overweight, ladies man, as a threatening rapist.

¹²² Elinor Glyn, 'Justice', *Motion Picture Magazine* (3/22), 21. William Pierce Randel (1965, p.189) also talks about Curry, stressing the link between the Klan and prohibition. Christopher N. Cocoltchos, 'The Invisible Empire and the Search for the Orderly Community: The Ku Klux Klan in Anaheim, California' in Shawn Lay ed., *The Invisible Empire in the West* (University of Illinois Press, 1992). Cocoltchos takes the Klan quotes from *Anaheim Daily Herald* (22/4/22).

¹²³ Susan Elizabeth Brady, 'Are we Immoral?', *Motion Picture Magazine* (6/21), 44.

¹²⁴ Noah D. Thompson, 'California: The Horn of Plenty', originally published in *The Messenger* (6/6/24). Reprinted in *These "Colored" United States* (1996), 41-49.

¹²⁵ The 'showered with gold' quote appears in 'The Sins of Hollywood: an Exposé of Movie Vice', which was published anonymously in 1922 and can be found in *The Movies in our Midst*, ed. by Gerald Mast (University of Chicago, 1982), 176-183. Susan Elizabeth Brady, 'Are we Immoral?', *Motion Picture Magazine* (6/21), 44. *Kourier* (11/27), 30.

¹²⁶ *Dallas Morning News* (12/9/21), 1. The quote is retold in DeCordova (2001), 126.

¹²⁷ William Pierce Randel, *Ku Klux Klan: A Century of Infamy* (Philadelphia: Chilton, 1965), 183. He quotes Dr Evans from *The North American Review* in Spring 1926. Evans claimed that 'we are a movement of the plain people, very weak in the matter of culture, intellectual support, and trained leadership.'

¹²⁸ Steven Ross (1998, pp.177-182) suggests that class positions are defined by an 'ability to consume' (wealth) rather than occupation by 1920. Middle Class status can be bought, and Hollywood encouraged these shifting class positions. Modern society encouraged class aspiration, and as more people bought into a middle class lifestyle, the term became so broad that it ceased to be of value. The Klan thus looked to define by race and religion. Film theatres, accommodating white people of all nationalities and religions, offered a particular threat to this.

¹²⁹ There are even sporadic examples within the Klan press of the Klan defending 'Hollywood', with *Fiery Cross* (9/1/25, p.5) dispelling the notion of Hollywood as a place where 'vice is commonly supposed to abound.'

¹³⁰ 'Jewish Pictures Threaten Youth', *Kourier* (9/33), 9-11.

¹³¹ Sam Stoloff, 'Normalising Stars: Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle and Hollywood Consolidation' from *American Silent Film: Discovering Marginalised Voices*, Gregg Bachman and Thomas J. Slater ed., (Southern Illinois University Press, 2002).

¹³² Eliot Asinof, *Eight Men Out: The Black Sox and the 1919 World Series* (Henry Holt, 1963), 133, 202, 213. One club owner even suggested that 'an appeal be made to gamblers' patriotism' to root out the corruption in the game.

¹³³ *Imperial Night Hawk*, (4/4/23, p. 3), (31/5/23, p.5), (11/7/23, p.4). The Klan baseball teams became important representatives of the Klan, with one picture showing a uniformed team, all dressed in white with 'Klan' blazoned across their chests. This may seem curious, but in many areas at the height of the Klan's popularity, there was no need for secrecy, and being a member of the Klan baseball team was a status symbol to be proud of.

¹³⁴ Wrigley attempted to sue *Tolerance*, the catholic newspaper, for claiming he was a Klan member. The Klan supported this action, noting 'we are for Mr. Wrigley and we hope that he will push his suit to the limit.' See *Searchlight* (10/2/23), 2.

¹³⁵ 'Wrigley Ball Park Damaged; Police Investigate Threats', *Dawn* (21/4/23).

¹³⁶ Asinof (1963), 135-6.

¹³⁷ 'Jewish Gamblers Corrupt American Baseball', *Dearborn Independent* (3/9/21).

¹³⁸ *Kourier* (3/27), 14.

¹³⁹ Harold Brackman, 'The Attack on "Jewish Hollywood": A Chapter in the History of Modern American Anti-Semitism' from *Modern Judaism 20.1* (2000). Senator Myers was criticised in *Moving Picture World* as a 'tireless seeker of publicity.' His motives were clear to the film

press, with the article headed 'Senator Myers again plays for limelight, charging film players with 'Debauchery and Free Love.' (15/7/22), 208.

¹⁴⁰ Scandal concerns the breakdown and transgression of social order, yet the film industry, representing social modernity, and most importantly foreign control, was seen as transgressive and as a 'scandal' in itself. The Klan emphasised its links with groups like the WCTU. The first head of the WKKK, Lulu Markwell, was a former head of the WCTU in Arkansas. *Fiery Cross* (5/1/23, p.1) also reported that the Klan sent a large basket of fruit to the WCTU Christmas celebration in 1922.

¹⁴¹ 'Editorial by Arthur James', *Moving Picture World* (8/1/21), 155. It is not until the eighth paragraph that the editorial states that 'it is not necessary to point out that starving children, no matter what their race, or sect, or creed, are starving children, and the little mouths must be fed.'

¹⁴² Exhibitors responded to the Arbuckle scandal by publishing a statement announcing that no films would be shown 'containing elements of indecency or objectionable matter of any kind, or the exploiting of any individual enveloped in scandal.' See 'Bar objectionable films', *New York Times* (26/9/21), 18. In 1924 the 'Federated Arts', an organisation made up of directors and other industry players, announced a plan to boycott any film featuring stars 'who were not conducting themselves in a manner to bring credit to the industry.' The writer, Harry Carr suggested this was aimed at Wallace Reid. See *LA Times* (24/12/24).

¹⁴³ Sam Stoloff, 'Normalising Stars: Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle and Hollywood Consolidation' from *American Silent Film: Discovering Marginalised Voices*, Gregg Bachman and Thomas J. Slater ed., (2002), 164. From Congress Record 9657.

¹⁴⁴ In 1923 a group of Methodist ministers in Chicago protested against judges who had barred members of the Klan from jury service. These church figures not only defended the Klan but also attacked Arbuckle, passing a resolution 'condemning the release of films in which Roscoe Arbuckle is featured and requesting Chief of Police Fitzmorris to bar them in Chicago.' The ministers denied being members of the Klan, but a number of right wing church groups, with apparent Klan sympathies, did instigate and encourage the negative publicity surrounding these scandals. See 'Ministers Protest Klan Ban', *Dawn* (13/1/23).

¹⁴⁵ *Variety*, (9/7/24).

¹⁴⁶ 'U.S. Begins Exposure of Jewish Movie Trust', *American Standard* (15/11/25), 519-520.

¹⁴⁷ 'Al and the Movies', *Searchlight* (31/5/24), 3. See also 'Independents Expose Corrupt Jew Movie Trust', *The American Standard* (15/2/25), 81.

¹⁴⁸ 'The Producer, the Distributor, the Exhibitor', *Dearborn Independent* vol. 22, no. 2 (5/11/21), pp.6 and 14.

¹⁴⁹ David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (1987), 3. *Imperial Night Hawk* (24/10/24, p.5), discusses Klan growth in California, while the assassination plot is reported on 23/7/24.

¹⁵⁰ 'Did Movie Ku Klux Slay Wm D. Taylor?', *Movie Weekly* (24/3/23), 1.

¹⁵¹ 'Is there a Ku Klux Klan in the Movies?', *Movie Weekly* (24/3/23), 4-5, 27.

¹⁵² 'Is there a Ku Klux Klan in the Movies?', *Movie Weekly* (24/3/23), 4-5, 27.

¹⁵³ *Movie Weekly* (24/3/23), 4.

¹⁵⁴ 'Movie Weekly Writer Threatened by Ku Klux Klan', *Movie Weekly* (2/5/23), 4-5, 27. The article accepted that the letter was almost certainly the work of an individual claiming to represent the Klan

¹⁵⁵ The reference to Kelly as a 'fighting Irishman' appeared in a preview to the next week's article on the contents page of *Movie Weekly* (28/4/23).

¹⁵⁶ *Movie Weekly* suggested that this 'mixture of white woman and Sheiks' referred to the Valentino film *The Sheik*, but it appears far more likely that the Klan was referring once more to *Bella Donna*, as the film was discussed in these terms by the Klan elsewhere.

¹⁵⁷ 'Movie Weekly Writer Received Official Communication from Ku Klux Klan', *Movie Weekly* (14/7/23), 4-5, 30.

¹⁵⁸ *Movie Weekly* (14/7/23), 4-5, 30. See also 'The Ku Klux Klan Writes to Us', *Movie Weekly* (14/7/23), 3. 'Shall the Ku Klux Klan Censor the Movies?', *Movie Weekly* (7/7/23).

¹⁵⁹ 'The Folly of 1921', *Motion Picture Magazine*, (8/21), 21.

¹⁶⁰ Frederick James Smith 'Foolish Censors', *Photoplay* (10/22), 39-41. The struggles of Oscar Micheaux may suggest that it was a 'Klan discourse' (white superiority, and traditional racial and gender roles) that was often protected by censors during the 1920s. Scenes of 'masked men becoming intoxicated' and of 'the killing of the leader of the hooded organisation' were cut from Micheaux's 1924 film *A Son of Satan* because the censors feared that such images would 'tend to incite crime'. The censors were concerned predominantly with maintaining social order, so that any images that challenged the social hierarchy could be opposed as a threat to this order. For this reason, film became an enormously difficult outlet for black advancement, with all African American films, as Thomas Cripps argued, having to bear 'white finger marks' from the censors.

¹⁶¹ 'Censoring the Movies', *Searchlight* (25/2/22), 4.

¹⁶² 'Sumner and Censorship', *Searchlight* (19/8/22), 4. *Searchlight* suggested that 'the American people are intelligent enough to act as their own censors.'

¹⁶³ *Dawn*, (6/1/23). Edward De Grazia, *Banned Films* (R.R. Bowker, 1982) claimed that *Birth* received more instances of censorship than any other film in history, and the Klan repeatedly opposed restrictions placed on this film as I showed in chapter one.

¹⁶⁴ 'Sex film title "Clean Up"', *Variety* (2/7/24), 1/21. Throughout July, *Variety* was littered with tales relating to censorship and the Klan. A further piece 'Hays Clean Up on Films', *Variety* (30/7/24, p.1/25) shows Hays attacking the film industry for their 'deception' in advertising films with sex titles, even if the film itself is not immoral.

¹⁶⁵ 'Patriots make War on Jew Movies', *American Standard* (1/2/25), 53-55. The Council was established under the slogan 'America mobilizing for wholesome moving pictures.' According to *The American Standard* 'no less than 116 organizations were represented' at its initial three-day meeting.

¹⁶⁶ *Kourier*, (12/26), 5. As I have suggested, the Klan's language would appear to be influenced in part by *Dearborn Independent*, which had complained in 1921 that the Jewish industry was not fit to guard over public morals, and conveniently presented the 'decent population in favor' of censorship and 'the Jews' 'behind the opposition'. See 'The Jewish Aspect of the "Movie" Problem', *Dearborn Independent* (12/2/21). The mainstream press discussed the issue in similar terms, with an editorial in *Variety* in 1924 highlighting the need for mothers to 'make the money-mad and demoralising picture producer behave himself'. See 'The Censor of the Future', *Variety* (16/7/24).

¹⁶⁷ 'Concerning the Movies', *Kourier*, (8/25), 3.

¹⁶⁸ 'Letter from Turner Jones to Wilton A. Barrett' (30/5/23). Held in *The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures Records*, housed at the New York Public Library.

¹⁶⁹ 'Movie Clean-Up Sought by Best U.S. Citizenship', *Dawn* (29/12/23), 9.

¹⁷⁰ 'Organization of Women Want Clean Films', *Fiery Cross* (30/3/23), 5. The committee was headed by Helen Varick Boswell. She argued that 'schools have not realized the possibilities of the films.' See also *Appleton-Post Crescent* (16/8/23), 13.

¹⁷¹ 'Letter from H. J. Mandeville to National Committee for Better Films' (23/4/23), from *The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures Records*, housed at the New York Public Library. The committee sent the literature, but offered no further response.

¹⁷² 'The Movie Censorship Joke', *Searchlight* (26/5/23), 2. The Klan admitted that it agreed with the board in opposing state censorship, but it criticised the board for its apparent support of 'Pola Negri's trashy offering', *Bella Donna*. "'Better Films Committee" in action', *Fiery Cross* (20/6/24), 3. The article also appeared in *Searchlight* (21/6/24), 6.

¹⁷³ 'Letter from Mrs Livengood to The National Board of Censorship' (6/3/25). The Board wrote a lengthy response, which while making no direct reference to the Klan, did conclude that 'it is very encouraging to see that the idea of our work is receiving recognition in Indiana territory.' Reply dated 11/3/25. Both contained in *The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures Records*, housed at the New York Public Library.

¹⁷⁴ 'Klansmen Vote to Aid Churches in Movie Fight', *Kokomo Daily Dispatch* (28/2/24), 1. 'Hundreds Sign Movie Petition at Tabernacle', *Kokomo Daily Dispatch* (28/2/24), 1. 'Commercial Sunday Movie Bosses' Aim', *Fiery Cross* (12/12/24), 8.

¹⁷⁵ 'To Paint Town Blue', *Moving Picture World* (15/12/23), 602. The paper expressed its concern at this move, claiming it would mean 'the blues for movie shows after January 1'.

¹⁷⁶ *Moving Picture World* (19/1/24), 204. The resolution of this dispute is also mentioned in *Film Daily* (10/1/24), 2.

¹⁷⁷ 'Ministers Ask Help of Klan to Abolish Sunday Movies', *Klan Courier* (20/6/24), 1. The article stated that 'both pro-Klan and anti-Klan clergymen unanimously agreed, it is reported, that the Klan should be asked to co-operate with the ministerial association and force Mayor Scheible to close the theaters on Sunday.'

¹⁷⁸ Raymond Moley, *The Hays Office* (The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1945), 33-34. Lowry wrote that 'Mr Hays... believes in the form of Government of the United States, the Presbyterian Church of which he is an elder, as was his father before him, and the Republican Party.' Black (1994) added that Hays was a 'Teetotaler, elder in the Presbyterian church, Elk, Moose, Rotarian, and Mason, Hays brought the respectability of mainstream middle America to a Jewish-dominated film industry.' 31.

¹⁷⁹ 'Religious Political Intrigue is Befuddling Public Opinion', *Dawn* (21/7/23), 13.

¹⁸⁰ "'Bella Donna" - Bah!', *Fiery Cross* (27/4/23), 4.

¹⁸¹ 'Patriots make War on Jew Movies', *American Standard* (1/2/25), 54.

¹⁸² Frank Walsh, *Sin and Censorship: The Catholic Church and the Motion Picture Industry* (Yale University Press, 1996), 30-35. When the Vatican abolished the National Catholic Welfare Council in 1922, a group concerned in part with the representation of Catholics within film, supporters of the council convinced the Pope to reverse the decision, 'citing the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan' as evidence of forthcoming anti-Catholic persecution. The council was renamed as The National Catholic Welfare Conference. See Walsh (1996), 18.

¹⁸³ Even in 1933 *Kourier* used *The Pilgrim* as its example when discussing film representation. 'One Jewish actor based a whole show on ridicule of the Protestant ministry. Millions of people saw this supposedly "comic" picture.' *Kourier* (September 1933), 10.

¹⁸⁴ The Klan did not directly use the example of *Black Legion* to condemn the foreign control of the film industry, as was often the case earlier, yet this was in part because there was little opportunity to do this within a structured legal dispute.

¹⁸⁵ Peter H. Amann, 'The Black Legion as an American Hybrid', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 25, No. 3. (July, 1983), 493.

¹⁸⁶ The film is based on Poole's killing. Publicity materials often emphasised the 'real life' story, and included original newspaper reports of the case.

¹⁸⁷ Judge Hartrick is quoted in *The Gettysburg Times* (2/9/36), 1. *The Port Arthur News* (24/5/36) contains the front-page headline 'Secret Night Riders linked to Klan' with the shorter headline 'Black Legion linked to Klan' on page two.

¹⁸⁸ Judge Hartrick admitted that 'the Black Legion and the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan became mortal enemies, each striving in the communities for political domination and control.' See *Fitchburg Sentinel* (1/9/36), 1/6. The report against The Black Legion condemned the Klan by association, as it declared that 'the hysterical or unthinking action will not cure the curse of bigotry, prejudice and 'playboy' antics which lead adult men under the moon at night, in hood and robe, to tinker with out constitutional safeguards which our forefathers vouchsafed nearly 150 years ago.' Judge Hartrick emphasised the links between the two groups, claiming that 'the first 200 members [of the Black Legion] were Klansmen who dyed their white robes black.'

¹⁸⁹ 'Letter from Bernard Cruse to Warner Bros.' (7/2/37), from the Warner Bros archives.

¹⁹⁰ The legal action was resolved in favour of Warners as the court determined that 'it is not an infringement to merely take pictures of costumes' and as 'the design patent was not applied to an article of manufacture for the purpose of sale', there was no infringement. Publicity for the film often emphasised the costume of the group. A typical poster depicted a picture of a Legion member with the words 'Their insignia... a cowardly hood! Their sign... a torturing lash! Their pass-word... a foul curse! Their grip... the clasp of death!' The court determined that the insignia was not used for the purpose of sale, even if it did encourage audiences to pay money and watch the film. Ultimately the case did not provide the Klan with a financial boost and the group had to pay costs. The Court Brief is contained within The *Black Legion* file at the Warner Bros archives at the University of Southern California.

Chapter Three:

Klan on Mainstream Screens: Industry responses to the Klan

Towards the end of the 1922 Clifford S. Elfert western *Big Stakes*, a woman, dressed all in white, runs frantically over the rocks. As she nears the edge of the cliff, she turns to face her pursuer, before warning, 'If you come near me - I'll jump.' The man takes a step closer, forcing the innocent woman to take one final step backwards. She crashes to the ground, yet her "purity" has been preserved.

This scene is remarkably similar to a scene within *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), in which Flora, pursued by the evil African-American Gus, jumps to her death to avoid his advances. Flora has, as the intertitle explained, 'learned the stern lesson of honor.' However, while in *The Birth of a Nation* Flora was chased by an African-American, in *Big Stakes*, the young woman, Mary Moore, is pursued by Bully Brand, a repulsive outlaw, and the leader of the Ku Klux Klan. In Griffith's earlier film, the Ku Klux Klan had served to protect womanhood, and avenge Flora's dramatic death, yet seven years later the Klan is presented as a direct threat to female innocence. The reversal is unmistakable, with *Big Stakes* appearing to expose the nightriders as a murderous group, driven by self-interest. The traditional southern values of honour and the protection of women, so carefully aligned to the Klan in *The Birth of a Nation*, are now proposed to be fraudulent.

Big Stakes may suggest a broader transformation in depictions of the Klan on film, as the film industry responded to the emergence of a modern anti-Semitic Klan. Yet, on closer inspection *Big Stakes* is not an anti-Klan critique, but rather presents a localised Klan group, that is misdirected by a corrupt leader. Furthermore, the representation of the Klan appears secondary to the spectacle of the Klan costume, as the group is positioned within a brief action sequence that is carefully removed from the main narrative of the film. The example of *Big Stakes* is consistent with a number of westerns in the 1920s, which do not present the Klan as inherently evil, but rather attempt to exploit the popular interest in the modern group. Throughout this chapter I will uncover many more Klan appearances, and consider not simply the representation

of the group on-screen, but rather how the discourses of the modern Klan, their opponents and the film industry are re-articulated on film and in broader film culture.¹ I will suggest that, despite the Klan's criticisms of the film industry, mainstream producers do not directly engage with or criticise the modern Klan during the 1920s. Furthermore, in often presenting a moral, non-violent organisation that was not driven by racial or religious prejudice, the industry often appeared to support the idealised vision of the Klan promoted by the head of the Klan, William Simmons.

In the previous chapter, I showed how interaction between the Klan and the emerging Hollywood film industry occurred on a discursive level, but I now wish to assess how these debates impacted on the representational tropes articulated across a group of films. This leads to two main questions that will run throughout this chapter. Firstly, how did the industry respond to the Klan, both on film and in publicity materials? Secondly, why did the industry respond to the Klan in this way, often appearing to support, or at least not directly attack, the modern Klan? This second part may be explained by the changing social situation between 1915 and 1928. The new socially active Klan was attacking the film industry, and producers may have been wary of inciting further conservative opposition. The Klan was defined as distinctly American and Protestant and, as criticisms of the industry predominantly concerned its 'foreign' control, producers were reluctant to either highlight their own ethnicity or criticise organisations associated with Americanism. Yet, the situation was multi-faceted, and the industry's responses to the Klan were also frequently directed by concerns over censorship and controversial material. These industrial restrictions stopped producers from directly addressing the modern Klan, and from presenting questions in relation to ethnicity and race. Concerns over censorship also led producers to position the Klan in distant times and settings and this ultimately encouraged the generic, exciting depiction of a non-racist Klan that appeared most commonly on mainstream screens during the 1920s.

When addressing the industry's responses to the Klan, I will delineate, in terms of both production and exhibition, the ways in which the industry represented, utilised and connected with the Klan, suggesting that exhibitors engaged with the modern Klan

in a manner that producers, under pressure from censors, were often unable to. In emphasising the importance of censorship in directing the industry's responses to the Klan, I will look once more at the continued legacy of *The Birth of a Nation*. The earlier example from *Big Stakes* suggested at the on going influence of the film on the representation of the Klan.² Yet, *Birth* also greatly restricted future presentations of the Klan on screen, as the controversy surrounding the film ensured that the Klan became a critical focus for regulatory concerns about cinema.³ The active engagement of Klansmen with *The Birth of a Nation* after 1920 meant that protests against *Birth* increasingly related to the film's depiction of the Klan, and during the 1920s films produced by the Klan, by its opponents, and by the industry that depicted the Klan all faced heavy censorship.⁴ After the success of *Birth*, producers sought to establish which aspects of this hugely popular film could be imitated within mainstream film, and often attempted to reposition the Klan imagery within fresh social contexts. This, as I will show, became more problematic after the emergence of a new Klan in 1920, but the industry's responses to the Klan must be understood as a negotiation between the restrictions and the commercial possibilities of the Klan on film. Issues of race and religion, depictions of violence and references to specific modern groups, were all avoided, but producers still sought to exploit the popular fascination in the Klan after 1915 and in particular after 1920.

The modern Klan: Making the Klan topical

In December 1915, less than a month after *Birth* had opened in Atlanta, *In the Clutches of the Ku Klux Klan*, a three-part drama, presented by the Gene Gauntier Feature Players, opened in the city.⁵ Historians, when mentioning the film, have often presented the picture as an edited version of *Birth*, but the film, which promised 'an accurate historical production of this famous organization,' was initially released two years before *Birth* in 1913.⁶ The reappearance of the film in 1915 highlights the desire amongst the producers and exhibitors to commercially exploit the popular interest in the Klan after *Birth*, and the publicity surrounding the re-released film aligned the picture

closely with Griffith's film. When *In the Clutches of the Ku Klux Klan* played at the Majestic Theatre in Fitchburg in October 1915, the local review noted that this 'thrilling story of the Reconstruction days in South... in many ways resembles the famous feature *The Birth of a Nation*.'⁷ *In the Clutches of the Ku Klux Klan* was reinvigorated in light of the success of *Birth* and highlighted the commercial possibilities of the Klan, yet after the controversy surrounding *Birth*, the Klan was historicised or relocated on screen.

In the 1916 historical epic *Joan the Woman*, 'a Catholic bishop and hooded inquisitors resembling Klansmen are the ultimate villains.' Sumiko Higashi argued that as the reorganised Klan was anti-Catholic as well as anti-African American, the film 'repressed fault lines in the social formation by conflating the Catholic hierarchy with the Klan as conspirators against Victorian womanhood.'⁸ By 1916 the Klan costume would certainly not have been viewed in relation to a modern anti-Catholic group, but the film is significant in exploiting the popular imagery from *Birth* and removing it from the context of the racist group operating during Reconstruction. *A Mormon Maid*, released in 1917, was advertised in Kansas as a 'sequel to "Birth of a Nation",' but it also appeared to reposition the Klan imagery. *A Mormon Maid* featured an antebellum group of Mormon fighters, labelled the avenging angels, who reviewers noted were dressed in the 'mysterious garb of the Ku Klux Klan.'⁹ In 1919, notices advertising *For the Freedom of the East* promoted 'the sensational uprising of the Ku-Klux-Klan of the far east.'¹⁰ All three films exploited the popular Klan imagery, but this imagery was placed within a fresh social context, and evidently depictions of white riders were still not viewed in a modern context. *The Syracuse Herald* noted in 1919 that the Chinese secret society depicted in *For the Freedom of the East*, 'is rather sensational like the Ku Klux Klan was once in the United States.'¹¹ The Klan was still viewed as a distant, deceased model.

By 1919 the modern Klan had barely registered, with producers able to present an archaic non-specific group on screen. Alice Joyce donned the Klan costume of the 'White Riders' in Tom Terris' 1919 picture *The Cambric Mask*, while the biggest star of all, Mary Pickford, dressed up as a Klanswoman in *Heart O' The Hills*. Neither film directly referred to the Klan, but the inference was clear and widely recognised by the

press. Exploiting the popular imagery and excitement generated by *Birth*, *Wid's Daily* wrote of *The Cambric Mask* that the White Riders 'take the law into their own hands after the manner of the famous Ku Klux Klan.'¹² The Klan was not viewed in modern terms by 1919, but rather as a reproduction of this outdated group, with an advert in *The Kansas City Star* describing the film as a 'story of Ku Klux Klan days.'¹³ Positioning the Klan within a modern context would have made little sense to audiences in 1919, as it was not until the following year, in particular when Edward Young Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler joined the organisation, that the Klan emerged as a modern group. The 1919 film *Bolshevism on Trial* positively emphasised its topicality with adverts describing the film as 'the picture of the hour' and 'the most timely picture of the year.'¹⁴ The final scene within the film evokes strong memories of the Klan rescue within *Birth*, perhaps unsurprisingly as both films were based on books by Thomas Dixon, yet *Bolshevism on Trial* responds to fresh social fears as the band of men dressed in white now attack a foreign Bolshevik. Kevin Brownlow noted that the rescuer in *Bolshevism on Trial* 'can't be the Ku Klux Klan this time, so it's the US Navy.'¹⁵ The Klan would appear an anachronism within this modern social context, and so the exciting white costume from *Birth* was repositioned on the U.S. Navy, while the values of the Klan were transferred on screen into the socially active Navy and American Legion.

Mary Pickford's appearance as Mavie, a 12 year old girl out to avenge her father's death in *Heart O' The Hills*, also occurred a year before the Klan returned to national prominence in 1920. Based on a best-selling novel by the popular Kentuckian writer, John Fox Jr., the film showed Mary Pickford leading a group of nightriders, who murder Sanders, a northern capitalist.¹⁶ Pickford is, as publicity material and syndicated reviews recognised, 'dressed in the garb of the Night-riding Ku Klux Klan,' and a suggested catch line for the film emphasised that 'Mary Pickford as a Night Rider, whirls over the mountains with the clansmen at her heels.'¹⁷ Pickford's decision to undertake the role of the nightrider is particularly interesting in light of the disputes surrounding her appearance in *The Little American* (1917). Her studio bosses, Jesse Lasky and Adolph Zukor were initially reluctant to allow Pickford to appear in a topical

War story, arguing that 'it is best for us to keep away from anything bearing on the conditions-past, present or future in connection with the European conflict. This is particularly true with Pickford as the star.'¹⁸ There was natural concern as to the type of film that Pickford should be seen in. The War was seen to be too topical, yet the Klan was not viewed as a controversial or potentially damaging role for Pickford to undertake. Producers avoided referring directly to the Klan, or presenting the night riders in relation to race, and this seemingly ensured that in 1919 the appearances of the Klan costume did not evoke the controversy or censorship that *Birth* had faced. However, the representation of night riders, and in particular of the Klan costume, became far more problematic and controversial once a modern Klan came to prominence in 1920.

By the end of 1920 the new incarnation of the Klan had entered the news. Oscar Micheaux directly confronted the modern Klan in his 1920 film *The Symbol of the Unconquered*. Micheaux emphasised that *The Symbol of the Unconquered* positioned the Ku Klux Klan as the villain, with *The New York Age* explaining that the film confronted 'the viciousness and un-Americanism of the Ku Klux Klan, an organisation that is beginning to manifest itself again in certain sections of the United States.'¹⁹ *The Symbol of the Unconquered* was now viewed in relation to the modern Klan, with one review describing the film as 'most timely, in view of the present attempt to organise night riders in this country for the express purpose of holding back the Negro.'²⁰ Jacqueline Stewart has suggested that Micheaux exploited the growing popular interest in the Klan, in part to boost the commercial appeal of his film. She argued that Micheaux 'attempted to capture and capitalize on the sensational, real-life topic of Klan violence, which enhanced the film's popularity after its initial release.'²¹ The emergence of the modern Klan did boost the commercial interest in the Klan (or unspecified night-riders) on screen, but it also heavily restricted appearances of the group. When *The Nation* attacked censorship in an editorial in December 1920, it complained that 'even Ku Klux Klan pictures were barred by the Kansas board.'²² This piece was referring directly to *The Symbol of the Unconquered*, while *The New York Times*, in September 1921, commented on a banning of a film most likely to have been *The Birth of a Nation*,

by reporting that the 'showing of a motion picture film dealing with the activities of the Ku Klux Klan of Civil War days was prohibited by the Police here today (Sep. 17).'²³ Both reports, in emphasising their subject matter, appeared to suggest that the censors were largely concerned with the appearance of the Klan.²⁴ It is also significant that the *New York Times* emphasised that *Birth* dealt with the Klan 'of the Civil War days,' as the paper seemingly sought to distinguish the group on screen from the modern Klan.

Depictions of the Klan were now topical, and political. Furthermore depictions of nightriders, or other bands of white costumed Americans were seen in relation to the Klan. *The Face at Your Window*, released in November 1920, featured the American Legion, yet a review for the film in *Wid's Daily* referred to the 'American Legion dressed in Ku Klux Klan uniforms riding to put down the riot of the laboring class.' It is significant that Kleagles (Klan recruiters) used *The Face at Your Window* for Klan recruitment, but it was equally the case that this film provoked extreme audience reactions when it was shown in regular theatres. As with *Birth*, audiences used the film to display their support or opposition to the modern group, with the review in *Wid's Daily* remarking that 'there were those in the house who showed their approval and greeted the various patriotic bits with applause and even pictures of Lenine [sic. Lenin] were approved by certain [people] in the audience.'²⁵ The reviewer questioned whether this picture would make 'better Americans,' but these films, and indeed the subject of the Klan on film would appear reinvigorated in 1920, and this evidently made the films more controversial for censors and exhibitors alike.

In 1921 Hal Roach produced the Snub Pollard short comedy, *Law and Order*, which was one of the very few films to directly address the modern Klan. The film positively exploited the popular interest in the Klan, with a review for the film in *Wid's Daily* writing that 'the comedy is novel and timely.' The copyright material for the film emphasised the relevance of the film's subject. It began by stating that 'with the newspapers revealing alleged stupendous grafting on the part of "Ku Klux" potentates, Pathe announces for release a comedy featuring "Snub" Pollard called "Law and Order" in which a local group of the 'Klan' figure in wholesale automobile burglary.' Even within this relatively minor comedy, *Wid's Daily* recognised a potential problem in

presenting this topical subject on screen. *Wid's* concluded its review by stating 'this one should do well before any audience, excepting perhaps in certain sections of the South.' This regional division was largely exaggerated, but the review was aware that as the Klan became topical, so too might audience reactions become more extreme.²⁶

For the most part producers avoided directly representing the modern Klan, although exhibitors, as I will show, were more willing to link the night riders on screen with the modern group appearing within the news. Adverts in 1922 exclaimed that 'a modern version of the once famous Ku Klux Klan is shown in "the White Masks".' This Franklyn Farnum western actually depicted a 'secret band known as the 601,' with a number of westerns released at the height of the Klan's popularity, such as *Cotton and Cattle* (1921) and the aforementioned *Big Stakes* (1922), depicting groups disguised as the Ku Klux Klan.²⁷ These night riders, invariably controlled by a corrupt leader, allowed producers to exploit the popular interest and excitement generated by the modern Klan, while still defensively removing the group on screen from the modern organisation.

The emergence of a new Klan after 1920 heightened the censorship and industrial restrictions that surrounded any depiction of Klan groups. As I showed in the opening chapter, the relevance of the subject matter caused problems (as well as commercial interest) for *Birth* during the 1920s. When *The New York Times* considered the re-release of *Birth* in 1922, it complained that the 'treatment of the story is such as to inflame passions today' adding that the 'social value of its revival at the present time is open to question - to say the least.' *Variety* also noted that 'the recent and present publicity regarding the Klan situation made it (*Birth*) problematic.'²⁸ As this new Klan emerged, films that portrayed the Klan (or indeed night-riders) were liable to be viewed in relation to this group. An article that appeared in *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* entitled 'Ku Klux Klan Comes to the Ideal Theatre Tonight,' recognised the interest and potential controversy generated by depictions of the Klan. The article stated:

Owing to the present uncertain feeling regarding the Ku Klux Klan, the showing at Gruwell's Ideal Theatre tonight and tomorrow evening of Henry [sic. John]

M. Stahl's super-photodrama 'One Clear Call' should be doubly interesting for not since 'The Birth of a Nation' has this night-riding organisation been seen in pictures with possibly one exception.²⁹

The paper recognised the scarcity of films featuring the Klan after *Birth*, and although there were a number of films which presented the group (and costume) in an action sequence, the Klan rarely featured as the subject of mainstream films during the 1920s. The Hollywood studios, striving for non-controversial material, free from censorship and external control, appeared cautious in their presentations of the Klan, as they were wary of provoking extreme, uncontrolled reactions.³⁰ This was a particular concern as some mainstream films, such as *One Clear Call*, were on occasion exploited and adopted by local modern Klan groups.

Yet, it was not only the presentation of the Klan that was problematic after *Birth* and after 1920. It was also more specifically the issue of race, which was inherently linked to the Klan in *Birth* and in public discourse. Protests against *Birth* had predominantly concerned the presentation of the African American, with the complaints in Detroit in 1921, for example, said to come from 'several committees of negro citizens, while other protests were instigated by the N.A.A.C.P.'³¹ In *Birth*, the Klan was evidently defined to a large extent by its racial attitudes, yet during the 1920s there was heightened sensitivity regarding the presentation of ethnic groups on screen, and so producers attempted to distinguish the Klan on screen from the issue of race. Mainstream presentations of the Klan now removed African-American targets, and this ensured that the dominant representation of the Klan was of a non-racist, law-enforcing group. This, as I will show, supported the Klan's own promoted identity as the Klan, particularly through its leader William Simmons, defined itself as a group of law enforcers concerned with supporting prohibition and the work of the Protestant church.

Race off screen: Removing the African-American target

After *Birth*, films featuring the Klan rarely presented themselves in relation to African American or immigrant targets. Furthermore, films from outside the industry that directly presented the modern Klan in relation to race, such as Micheaux's *The Symbol of the Unconquered* (1920) and *A Son of Satan* (1925), and Hopp Hadley's *The Knight of the Eucharist* (1922) all faced heavy censorship. The Motion Picture Commission in New York refused a license to *The Knight of the Eucharist*, noting that the film was 'sacrilegious' as it showed the Klan 'announcing their intention of desecrating the altar of a Roman Catholic Church.'³² Depicting the Klan as a racist group was difficult because it necessarily relied on revealing racial and religious targets. It was thus not simply the subject of the modern Klan that concerned censors, but the issue of race and religion, closely associated with the modern Klan. Producers now downplayed questions of ethnicity and race in order to avoid controversy, bypass censorship and avoid offending audiences. This ensured that the Klan often appeared as an exciting, largely non-threatening, law enforcing group.

The African-American was often eliminated from screen entirely after *Birth*, as, for example, in *Heart O' The Hills* and *The Cambric Mask*, yet in John M. Stahl's 1922 film *One Clear Call*, African-American characters do appear. However, they no longer feature in relation to the Klan, with *Moving Picture World* reporting that a scene involving the Klan 'is broken at two intervals by a happy little colored boy's melon feast.'³³ An advert for the film described the two African American characters as 'Toby, the quaint old southern darky' and 'Smoke, whose heart was as big as a water melon.'³⁴ The African-American was now presented as a contented, non-threatening figure, consciously removed from the action of the film. A Mulatto character also featured within *One Clear Call*, but, rather than a rapist or wild schemer, was a maid played by Annette de Foe (in blackface) in a minor supporting role.

In *Lodge Night*, released a year later in 1923, two African Americans join the Cluck Cluck Klams, a children's fraternal group clearly based on the Klan. Even with this appearance, the producers attempted to dissociate the Klan from the issue of race by

allowing these two children to join the group. The values of the group were also largely ignored as the younger African-American is introduced with the title 'Farina - Doesn't know what the lodge is all about - But is in favor of anything.' The film reversed traditional presentations of the Klan, as the two African-American children actually try to escape their African American guardians in order to go to a Klan meeting; 'We gotta melt outta here- the Kluxers is waiting.' The children are running *to*, not *from*, the Klan. However, by presenting the surprising image of black faces in familiar white hoods, the producers drew attention to the Klan's established racial values. Furthermore, the white robes of the Klan still generated fear and panic, as the adult African-Americans all run frantically for cover when the little African-American child appears in his white costume. *Kid Speed* (1924), a Larry Semon film, best remembered now for featuring an early appearance from Oliver Hardy, also exploited the fear generated by this Klan costume. In one sequence Semon is racing in his car with an African-American, when a white sheet (complete with face markings!) falls on him. The African-American, G. Howe Black, on seeing this white robed figure is petrified and leaps from the car.³⁵ These sequences were obviously played for comic effect and, to an extent, the Klan costume was desensitised, but it is significant that the Klan (or at least the costume) was still feared by the African- American characters. This is also apparent in the Klan made film, *The Toll of Justice*, which avoided presenting the (genuine) Klan in relation to the African-American, but still highlighted the inherent fear generated by the Klan costume amongst African American characters.

In *The Fifth Horseman* (1924) an African American character appears only to stare in 'amazement with eyes wide' when a Klansmen appears. The African American asks Sonny 'What's de mattah wif you, boy! When I sees a white spirit, I runs.'³⁶ The film certainly does nothing to break African American stereotypes, and, even though the film attempted to present the Klan as an honourable moral group not driven by racial prejudice, the Klan costume was still presented as a source of fear for the African Americans. The African American appeared as a subsidiary character that bore no relation to the main narrative of the film, yet the Ohio Censor Board only approved *The Fifth Horseman* in November 1924 after producers 'cut out entire episode of boy talking

with young Negro on street.' This was the only scene cut, and the board further stipulated that the entire title mentioned above, that referred to the 'white spirit' should be removed. The censorship certainly highlights the problems of presenting the Klan in relation to race even in a small scene, and indeed of presenting African American characters on screen.³⁷

The Fifth Horseman presented the African American character as a barely literate stereotype, largely removed from the activities of the Klan. In *The Toll of Justice*, the African American is reduced to the illiterate, if loyal servant, dutifully carrying out the orders of his master; 'No Sah- Mistah, Dale done say you can't come in heah sah!' Adult African-Americans also feature in *Lodge Night*, but, as with *One Clear Call*, they serve as a comic scene excluded from the main part of the plot. Lightly mocked and lampooned, they are presented as illiterate fools unable to resist the urge to gamble. Historical work has suggested that attitudes towards race were not significantly reconfigured during this period, with the shifting presentation of the African-American rather a response to regulatory concerns. The presentation of Reconstruction, put forward initially by the Dunning School of historians, and subsequently presented most powerfully within *Birth*, was not significantly challenged during this period.³⁸ Claude Bowers' hugely popular *The Tragic Era*, published in 1929, presented the impressionable, ignorant black as racially inferior, while also creating a damning presentation of racial integration during the period. David Levering Lewis described Bowers' work as a 'lynching in prose.'³⁹ U. B. Phillips also published his influential work, *Life and Labor in the Old South* in 1929, in which he presented a paternalistic, but separatist view of African-Americans. This paternalistic attitude towards African-Americans is seen within *One Clear Call* and *Lodge Night*, but can also be seen throughout film history, even through the work of D.W Griffith. In *His Trust* (1911), the dutiful African-American George risks his own life to look after his mistress, while even in *Birth* loyal African-American servants are presented. The significant factor, of course, is that Griffith also presented the dangerous mulatto in *Birth* and it is this figure that is largely removed from film during the 1920s.

The mulatto, when featured, was now reduced to a non-threatening servant or entertainer, with a review for *Strut Miss Lizzy*, a 'lively Negro show' which played in New York in 1922, concluding by praising 'some dapper young mulatto on the piano, who danced while he played the piano and still had energy left to smile simultaneously.'⁴⁰ Film (and the stage) did not shift its attitude towards African-Americans but, rather, appeared increasingly wary of displaying alternative depictions (particularly in cosmopolitan New York) after a series of race riots during the summer of 1919 and the controversy that surrounded *Birth*.⁴¹ Articulations of ideas about racial hierarchies were cut from film discourse, and a generic, monolithic depiction of African-Americans became increasingly dominant. Nervous non-confrontational film bosses were unwilling to present the African-American as a villain, regardless of their racial prejudices, but positive redefining and empowering depictions of the African-American were equally scarce. This suggests, once more, that it was a nervous sensitivity, rather than a drastic change in attitude that ensured the removal of race from films involving the Klan.⁴²

A *New York Times* editorial of 1923, entitled 'None but the Native villains,' suggested that African-Americans could no longer be presented as villains, concluding that the 'only safe villain is an atheist American.'⁴³ The desire to create a villain 'safe' from censors and campaigning groups, such as the N.A.A.C.P., was clearly at the forefront of producers' minds. In New York, exhibitors, eager to avoid any further unrest, showed scenes of work done at the African-American school at Hampton with complimentary references to the Tuskegee institute, following screenings of *Birth* in 1922.⁴⁴ The Chicago Board of Censors placed A.J. Bowling, an African-American on their board, so that no picture 'which has a Negro theme' could be passed until he had seen it, illustrating that censors were now aware of the dangers of representing African-Americans on screen.⁴⁵

The modern Klan, as I have suggested, targeted Catholics and Jews as much as African-Americans, yet these groups were also largely avoided in mainstream films during the 1920s. At the height of the Red Scare in 1919/20 there were Jewish villains on screen, although these were more specifically presented as Bolsheviks.⁴⁶ The anti-

Semitic press (such as *Dearborn Independent*) emphasised the link between the Jew and the Bolshevik, and this link was also hinted at in the publicity materials for *The Face at Your Window* (1920), *Riders of the Dawn* (1920) and *Bolshevism on Trial* (1919). The Jewish nature of these villains was clearly inferred in posters, but censors and leading Jewish figures closely monitored these associations between Bolshevik enemies and Jewish characters. Steven Ross has shown how pressure from the Jewish press and the Catholic Al Smith (a man who would become a leading Klan target during his 1928 presidential campaign) 'forced the producers of *The Volcano* to alter its blatantly anti-Semitic plot.' The hero's name was changed from Garland to Nathan Levison and the 'hook-nosed' villain was given the line 'I am not a Jew; I am a Bolshevik.'⁴⁷

The strong Jewish influence within the industry ensured that, as Lester Friedman argued, all films featuring Jewish characters 'historically faced a gauntlet of highly placed Jewish executives.'⁴⁸ Jewish executives appeared reluctant to draw attention to their own ethnicity during the 1920s and, in many respects, the removal of this 'foreign' enemy encouraged an often nostalgic and romantic presentation of a non-racist Klan. However, the exclusion of the ethnic target also undermined the role of the group. The Klan defined itself through distinctions of race, religion and nationality but film, by avoiding these distinctions, often appeared to assimilate, as Michael Rogin suggested, religious divisions within the broader racial ideal of whiteness.⁴⁹ Diane Negra has suggested that anxieties surrounding the Eastern European Jewish immigrant were still articulated on screen through the vamp character during the 1920s. Negra referred to the ambitious vamp as a 'sexual, economic and ethnic contaminant' who, rather than adjusting to American life, converted others to her own 'foreign' ways. She is intrinsically linked to city life, destabilising class and race boundaries, and illustrates the dangers of the modern sexualised woman. This vamp character, exemplified by Pola Negri, was certainly the subject of Klan criticisms, as I have suggested, yet this immigrant woman was not presented as a Klan enemy on screen.⁵⁰ By the time of the Klan's re-emergence in 1920, the industry largely avoided presenting targets that were defined by their race or religion.

The censorship of *Shadows of the West* in 1920 further highlights the difficulties in representing an ethnic Klan target. In *Shadows of the West*, the night riders (claiming to be the American Legion and riding horses in casual clothing) rescue Mary, the kidnapped girl from Oriental captors. *The Daily Kennebec Journal* wrote that 'wherever *Shadows of the West* has been seen, it has aroused a veritable furore,' concluding its review by remarking that this 'is the kind of a picture that will make you get right up in your seat and give three rousing cheers and perhaps a yell or two.'⁵¹ The film presented the Japanese as 'profiteers, wife-beaters and would be murderers,' and *Moving Picture World* recognised that the film was a 'propaganda film pure and simple, based on the presence of thousands of Japanese in California.' The film directly confronted the modern issue of race within America, with the review adding that, should the film attain wide circulation, it 'will increase the difficulties between the country and the island empire.'⁵² *The Record* claimed that this film 'will make the country safe for Americans,' but the foreign enemy and extreme reactions generated by the film evidently concerned the film industry and the censors.⁵³ This eight-reel film was rejected on two occasions by the Board of Censorship in Ohio, and it was deemed unreleasable in many areas because of its inflammatory characterisation of the Japanese. It was eventually released in some areas in 1921 as a five-reel film.⁵⁴

The presentation of a racial enemy within *Shadows of the West* not only invited censorship but also, according to one review, potentially restricted the commercial appeal of the film. *Entertainment Trade Review* suggested that, while the film may prove popular on the Pacific Coast (where there was a large Japanese population), in the rest of the country its enemy target might appear less relevant.⁵⁵ The non-confrontational cinema of Hollywood also appeared to be bound by economic considerations, as Ruth Vasey has suggested, with producers seeking a non-confrontational product that could appeal to all viewers. The shared experience of the mass audience meant that producers, as Koppes and Black suggested, avoided 'giving offence to any powerful group.'⁵⁶

During the early twenties a depiction of the Klan could isolate either the Klan members or their opponents from the audience, but why should this concern the film

industry? Charlene Regester suggested that in the case of Oscar Micheaux's *The Symbol of the Unconquered*, 'unfavourable depictions of the Ku Klux Klan, and scenes that made retaliation against the Klan seem admirable, would certainly offend white audiences,' but a negative depiction of the Klan need not divide audiences along racial lines.⁵⁷ The Klan may have had four million members at its peak, but in the priority first run cosmopolitan theatres, these figures would not have been a consideration. *Birth* was the most successful film of all time, in part because it was both confrontational and divisive, but producers appeared reluctant to isolate any section of the film-going public. The continued success of *Birth* surely suggested that producers could enjoy considerable success without an African-American audience, so why then should mainstream producers be so concerned about Klan or African-American audiences? These groups may not have been significant demographics, but, as I have suggested, they were still important as moral forces capable of influencing attitudes.⁵⁸ The Klan directed protests against both the film industry and individual films, while African-American groups, most notably the N.A.A.C.P., had also launched attacks against the film industry.⁵⁹ As calls for external regulation grew stronger, the industry could not afford enemies. Economically it was not the loss of the Klan or African-American audiences that was of concern, but, rather, the potential damage that these groups could cause to the industry's reputation and image. The continued success of *Birth* suggested that controversial, confrontational film could enjoy commercial success, but the growing calls for external regulation encouraged conservatism within the industry. In the late 1930s, with support for the Klan negligible, the industry produced a cycle of anti-Klan films. By 1936, the Klan was a marginalised minority that was no longer influential in film discourse. Economically the Klan now appeared a more appealing target.

I have suggested that *The Birth of a Nation* restricted future presentations of the group during the 1920s. The controversy and censorship surrounding the film, and the increased sensitivity towards race on screen, made the Klan (and, more specifically, what the group was seen to represent) a problematic subject for the industry. The emergence of a new Klan only heightened concern, as the Klan became topical once more. These three factors (censorship, race, and topicality) were obstacles and

restrictions faced by all industry films in their presentations of the Klan during the 1920s. However, it is also important to consider that *Birth* was the most successful film of all time, and was estimated to have taken \$4 million during 1921 from a reissue in the South and Midwest. *Moving Picture World* reported that the film was playing 'to capacity business at the Auditorium Theatre, Chicago' in 1924 even though the Klan revival had long been crushed there, while in Missouri, where the Klan remained strong, the film played to 'record attendances.'⁶⁰ The film remained massively popular and, in many respects, as Oscar Micheaux recognised, the fact that the subject was now newsworthy and relevant would appear to heighten the commercial appeal of the Klan on film. The Hollywood industry could not ignore success, and any profitable film, however problematic, will always be imitated. *The Birth of a Nation* was no exception, with producers and exhibitors striving to establish which aspects should, and with censorship concerns could, be taken from the film. How then did these films overcome the restrictions that appeared after *The Birth of a Nation*? How was the Klan depicted during this period? Who were the targets shown? How were the films promoted and received? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to look at some individual examples of films from this period, starting with Mary Pickford's appearance in *Heart O' The Hills* in 1919.

Heart O' The Hills: Presenting a national identity

Heart O' The Hills appeared at a significant moment, arriving four years after *The Birth of a Nation*, but shortly before the Klan returned to national prominence. This film would appear to illustrate the transformation of the on-screen Klan after *Birth*, with the film responding to the controversy and censorship that had surrounded Griffith's film. The film avoids the issue of race and presents the Klan not as the subject of the film but as an action sequence within a romantic comic story. The nightriders appear in a distant regional setting as a largely nostalgic, non-threatening presentation of the group is shown. Unlike later films, the nightriders within the film were not viewed in relation to the modern Klan, while the appearance of the world's biggest star, Mary

Pickford, in robes, encouraged a largely sympathetic presentation of the group (See fig. 4).⁶¹ The appearance of 'America's Sweetheart' Mary Pickford also offered fresh legitimacy to these vigilante groups and, as with *Birth*, encouraged audiences to embrace the actions of these regional Klan groups on a national level.

Heart O' The Hills centres on the 'primitive and picturesque people' of the Kentucky Hills, with Mary Pickford appearing as Mavie, a twelve year old girl out to avenge her Father's death ('I promised Pap, I'd Git him'). The young girl also opposes the planned developments on her lands, and leads a group of nightriders, who murder Sanders, a 'northern capitalist.' Mavie is convicted of the murder, but a sympathetic jury cannot bear to see Mavie hanged, and so all in turn claim responsibility for the killing, until the judge decides he must release her. These activities are justified within the film through the clear regional setting offered. The opening intertitle explains that these people 'operate with a stern code of justice,' while a later title remarks that the 'mountaineer is often a law unto himself.' *Heart O' The Hills* offered a distant regional identity and dialect, comfortably removed from the modern cosmopolitan cities of the North. It was certainly not unique in presenting the Klan in this remote setting. The film was remade in 1924 as *The Hill Billy* and reviews for the film again emphasised that the picture offered an 'appealing study of the lives and environment of a distinct class of people in the Kentucky Mountains.'⁶² The locale of *One Clear Call* was a small Alabaman town, with *The Pittsburgh Post* referring to the film as 'a startling story of the South.' Furthermore a fictionalised account of the film, which appeared in *Photoplay*, dismissively referred to 'the Clan, which flourishes here and there in the South.'⁶³ *The Cambric Mask* was widely referred to as 'an exciting and thrilling tale of the South and of the "Ku Klux Klan",' while the Klan group in the Franklyn Farnum western *The White Masks* (1922) operated 'in the wilderness of a Western town.'⁶⁴

Even in the Harold Lloyd short, *An Eastern Westerner* (1920), the Klan group, described within the film as 'masked angels,' operate in 'The Little Town of Piute Pass' where 'it's considered bad form to shoot the same man twice on the same day.' The regional setting is presented in direct contrast with the dance halls of Brooklyn from where Lloyd's character originated. *Lodge Night*, another Hal Roach comedy from

The Mary Pickford Company
Presents

Mary
Pickford

In her
Third Picture
from her
own Studios

"HEART
O' THE
HILLS"

From the novel by
John Fox, Jr.

Directed by S. A. Franklin
Photographed by Charles Rosher



A First National Attraction



1923, may appear an exception as the film was based on a children's Klan group in Sayville, New York. Yet no direct references were made to this throughout the film, and the film again presented an isolated, local group, rather than a broad national one. The Klan was well established in Sayville during the 1920s. David Behrens of *Newsday* reported that 'one out of seven to eight on Long Island was a Klan member,' yet the industry continued to present the group in distinct regional settings, as this allowed censors, reviewers and audiences to embrace these films as escapist.⁶⁵

The presentation of the Klan as a localised southern group was a myth, as the modern Klan would become strongest in areas such as Ohio, and Indiana, yet this myth was invaluable in presenting an acceptable Klan on screen. By positioning the film in remote southern settings, the Klan was distanced from the modern organisations emerging in the North and Midwest. *The New York Times* claimed, somewhat patronisingly, that the Klan appealed most in the southwestern area where 'imagination are starved by a prosaic and unpoetic environment.'⁶⁶ During the 1920s there appears a concerted effort to present the Klan as a product of the backward South, and this is supported by the appearances of the Klan on mainstream screens. Jacqueline Stewart noted that Oscar Micheaux positively challenged this regional myth, positioning his dramatic scenes of Klan violence within New England and the Midwest within *The Symbol of the Unconquered*. Stewart argued that Micheaux 'exposes the fact that night riding is not limited to the seemingly more repressive southern districts,' suggesting that this was intended to 'increase political awareness and his [Micheaux's] box office receipts.' Micheaux believed that by taking the Klan out of distant regional settings, he could relate the Klan to broader sections of the movie going public and thus increase the film's 'potential viewership.' Micheaux confronted the modern Klan on screen, but mainstream industry films, aware of censorship and potential unrest, appeared to underplay the topicality that Micheaux sought. If Micheaux's reasoning is followed, then the mainstream films, locked in distant regional settings, may have struggled to relate to audiences on a national level and thus may have suffered at the box office. Yet, as I will show, exhibitors often highlighted links between films and the modern Klan in

ways that producers could not, and the distinct regional settings were embraced on a national level.⁶⁷

There may have been a desire to divide the country along regional lines in the 1920s, yet film often sought to articulate a rejoining of regional difference in support of ideas of a united national space. For example, at the end of *The Virginian*, an intertitle explained that 'Molly's New England conscience surrendered to love' as the two figures were united, predominantly on southern terms. Thomas Dixon, the author of *The Clansman*, the novel on which *The Birth of a Nation* was based, claimed his film was 'transforming the entire population of the North and West into sympathetic southern voters.'⁶⁸ *Heart O' The Hills*, like the majority of mainstream films featuring the Klan, presented a distinctly southern setting, and even offered a northern aggressor. The film justified the vigilante activities within the film by suggesting that they were specific to that local community, yet, through the appearance of 'America's Sweetheart' Mary Pickford, the values of this community were embraced on a national level.⁶⁹

By 1920 Mary Pickford was the world's biggest screen star, particularly after her marriage to Douglas Fairbanks. When the couple travelled to England during 1920 *Picturegoer* reported that 'in all history there is no parallel to their conquest. Julius Caesar had nothing on Doug and Mary.'⁷⁰ More significantly, Mary Pickford was viewed by this stage as a carefully constructed symbol of America. Pickford's efforts during the War, selling War bonds, had led *The New York Times* to talk of her 'grabbing the patriotic bull by the horns.'⁷¹ Posters were circulating of little Mary knocking out the Kaiser, while Pickford also donned a military suit and delivered ambulances for the Red Cross. She 'stirred the hearts of the nation' in her patriotic picture *The Little American* (1917), while the War had cemented Pickford's position as 'America's Sweetheart' and as 'Our Mary.'⁷² By *Heart O' The Hills*, this Canadian actress was so firmly established within American culture that she was able to play a very localised southern girl. *The Chicago Tribune* said that 'in the hearts and minds of her countrymen [Americans!] she ranks second to none,' claiming that there was more 'universal interest' in Pickford than President Wilson.⁷³ *Picturegoer* outlined the appeal of Pickford succinctly when it presented her in 1919 as 'the big sister to the family of picturegoers,' appearing as a

positive influence over the nation and as a moral force for good.⁷⁴ Pickford, as a big sister to the nation, embodied the traditional values that the country wished to fight for with her purported innocence and spirit. These imagined values were intrinsically linked to the nightriders in this film, and, while the Klan on screen was not always seen in relation to the re-emerging group, Mary Pickford's appearance in white robes would seem to place the Klan and other vigilante groups as a significant and legitimate part of American culture.

The New York Times had dismissed the novel (on which the film was based) as offering an 'incurably romantic point of view,' and had criticised Fox's 'disposition to moralise and rhapsodise about the virtues' of the Kentuckians, yet the film was praised by the same paper for the atmosphere 'so successfully compounded into stories of the Kentucky and N. Carolina Mountains.'⁷⁵ It similarly praised the 'genuine in its characterisations,' while another northern reviewer praised Pickford for her 'faithfulness to characters.'⁷⁶ *Variety* emphasised that the film was set in the Kentucky Hills 'where the community has a code all of its own,' yet there is no evidence that this setting was problematic for northern viewers, as the reviewer still took great pleasure in watching Pickford exact her revenge.⁷⁷

The reception of *Heart O' The Hills* suggests that there was a social acceptance within America (and American cinema) for the vengeful responses displayed within the film. The cinematic acceptance of vigilante justice within rural communities was apparent as early as 1905, when the Klan costume featured within the Edison film, *The White Caps*. *The White Caps* offered an easily comprehensible narrative based around a chase sequence, and the film's structure was remarkably similar to the Klan sequences within *Heart O' The Hills*. *The White Caps* presented the night riders in the rural border states operating, not as a racist group, but rather as a moral force, in this case targeting a husband shown beating his wife and daughter. The film did differ from later presentations, most notably in the level of violence shown on screen, as the victim was tied and covered in tar and feathers, but the film offered a clear promotion of vigilante violence.⁷⁸ The film encouraged audiences to identify with the vigilante groups and contemporary reports certainly did not challenge the values presented within the picture.

The Portsmouth Daily Herald, in commenting on the film, explained that 'The White Caps were not law breakers at heart, but their bands were usually made up of reputable citizens of the communities to which they belonged, who aimed to mete out just punishment to disreputable people, such as wife beaters, habitual drunkards etc.'⁷⁹ *The Altoona Mirror* headlined its review 'Warning to Wifebeaters' and when the film showed at the local Pastime theatre, it was listed as 'Punishing a wife-beater or The White Caps.'⁸⁰

The film and the public response to the film highlighted the social acceptance of vigilante justice in 1905. Lee Grieveson further illustrated the presentation of violence within early film as a justified response to moral failure (and in particular to threatened gender roles). Grieveson refers closely to *The Unwritten Law* (1907), a film based on the Thaw-White scandal, in which Harry Thaw's murder of Stanford White is justified on the grounds that White had been sexually intimate with Thaw's wife.⁸¹ Grieveson presents this film (and indeed the case on which it is based) within a broader historical tradition of the 'unwritten law.' This code of moral conduct, not protected by existing legal forces, was readily embraced within early film, and Michelle Wallace suggested that the vigilante violence presented within *The White Caps* was subsequently 'memorialized' in cowboy movies.⁸² I would certainly suggest that the promotion of vigilante justice extended from early films, such as *The White Caps*, through most notably to the Civil War movie and the western.

By 1919 national newspaper reports were largely sympathetic to the values promoted within *Heart O' The Hills*. An article published in *The New York Times* subtitled 'When American communities have taken the law into their own hands,' suggested a fresh need for these groups, described as 'conservative rather than destructive.'⁸³ Groups such as The American Legion emerged as hugely popular, government-supported organisations and, after the War, conservative values became increasingly established within American social and political life. As I suggested in chapter one, the film industry was strongly encouraged to promote conservative ideals, producing Americanism films such as *The Face at your Window*. When the Klan becomes a vocal presence in criticisms against the industry, mainstream producers do

not challenge or directly criticise the Klan. Producers, largely because of censorship, often appear to endorse the Klan's own image of itself, but the industry also more broadly promotes ideals that are defined as 'American' in order to defend its own national identity. Daniel Bernardi suggested that the values associated with the Klan transcended early cinema, crossing 'studios, authors, genres and styles.'⁸⁴ Bernardi's argument highlights the broad currency of films supporting and responding to values associated with the Klan, and this is, in part, a response to the repeated criticisms against the national and religious identity of the industry.

The presentation of the Klan as a vigilante force was further shaped by industrial restrictions in screen violence and racial targets, so that the night riders in *One Clear Call*, *The Fifth Horseman* and *Shadows of the West*, do not ultimately mete out violence. Instead, they present a warning to the moral wrongdoers, and then, most notably in the case of *Shadows of the West*, leave the punishment to established law enforcers. Despite the restrictions on the presentation of vigilante groups, the popular reception of *Heart O' The Hills* highlights that heroic vigilantes were accepted on screen. However, the image of Mary Pickford killing her father's murderer would still appear to influence attitudes towards these night-riding groups. Ostensibly, the film may appear to strengthen and legitimise the work of these conservative, protective groups, but the appearance of Mary Pickford in this role also complicated and undermined attitudes towards the Klan, most notably concerning masculinity and gender roles within modern society.

'Mary Pickford can shoot and she shoots to kill': The female night rider'⁸⁵

The character played by Mary Pickford in *Heart O' the Hills* was originally a boy in John Fox Jr.'s novel. A review for the novel explained that 'a little boy in the fastnesses of the Kentucky Mountains is the central figure,' later referring to 'the mountain boy hero.'⁸⁶ Pickford's role within the film was a distinctly masculine one, with a 1924 remake of the film, entitled *The Hill-Billy*, casting her brother Jack in the central role. Pickford destabilises gender boundaries within the film by assuming a

masculine role as the father figure within her household. When her mother attempts to beat her, Pickford grabs the Hickory Cane stick and snaps it, before shouting 'Be My Dinner ready, Mammy.' Her attempts to be a lady largely falter. She shouts 'I air a Lady' but soon finds herself in a fight with a man who claims that she isn't. Her language is also harsh, as she talks of 'raisin' h--l generally,' while she dismisses one man, as 'I ain't answerin' no questions from a fella that wears gal's socks.' The gender boundaries become increasingly blurred, and this has strong repercussions for the presentation of the Klan.

The Klan was concerned with retaining social hierarchy. It fought to protect women, and in particular an idealised image of womanhood, while retaining white male superiority. Pickford, by joining this 'male fraternal preserve' and leading the nightriders, is masculinised and appears to undermine these aims.⁸⁷ Although large numbers of women would later join the Klan after the establishment of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan in June 1923, their role was largely confined to spreading rumour, organising consumer boycotts and less dangerous pursuits.⁸⁸ In *The Birth of a Nation*, Lillian Gish, seen kissing a dove and dancing gleefully, had 'served to reempower the white man.'⁸⁹ Griffith had intercut shots of the family and then the army, and panned from a crying mother to battle in order to highlight the two distinct gender roles, yet, in *Heart O' The Hills*, the gender boundaries are unclear. In *Birth*, the male characters had fought to protect the threatened females, but in *Heart O' The Hills*, Pickford is empowered and undertakes this role herself.

The Cambric Mask, released in 1919 also featured a female nightrider, this time played by Alice Joyce. This film ultimately presented a critical view of vigilante violence, as Alice Joyce's character, Rose, infiltrates the gang and dons the familiar white costume in order to save her beau from the nightriders. The nightriders try to force the male hero, John Sark, to sell some valuable land, yet the presentation of the Klan actually shared much in common with *Heart O' The Hills*. The Klan was not driven by racism, but was instead viewed in relation to land development, while both films presented an exciting localised group. However, the presentation of female nightriders threatened the role of this male fraternal group. In *The White Caps* (1905), the

nightriders protected the helpless woman, yet such a presentation was reliant on clearly defined gender boundaries as, in order to protect women, the Klan must present women as a helpless minority in need of protection. The presentation of the female nightrider in these two films from 1919 contributed to a more accessible and less threatening presentation of the Klan, but this feminisation of the Klan also undermined the identity of a group that constantly emphasised and responded to the dangers faced by modern women.

Mary Pickford's appearance as a young independent woman, who stood and fought her own battles, also fitted in with her developing off-screen persona. Pickford was heavily involved in the founding of United Artists at this time, prompting *Heart O' The Hills* director Sidney Franklin to describe Pickford as 'the boss; she was her own producer,' while the advertisements for the film emphasised that the picture was from 'her own studios.'⁹⁰ It was Pickford herself, under the name Gladys Mary Moore, who bought the exclusive motion picture rights to the novel of *The Heart Of The Hills* in June 1919. The contract between Pickford and John Fox Jr. confirmed that, for eleven thousand dollars, Pickford had complete control over the material, and was able to 'make motion picture versions thereof, and to adapt, arrange, change, transpose, add to, subtract from the said composition.'⁹¹ Mary was the driving force behind the film, and her reputation as the traditional, innocent, yet feisty schoolgirl, established through her earlier film credits, appeared threatened by her activities as a modern, independent producer and also more publicly by her divorce from Owen Moore and subsequent remarriage to Douglas Fairbanks.⁹²

Pickford was being sexualised both on and off screen, and this was threatening the perception of her as a chaste and pure symbol of womanhood. Gary Carey noted that Pickford's leading men were usually as 'sexless as paper dolls,' yet John Gilbert, a man soon to establish himself as a Hollywood heart-throb, presented a different proposition in *Heart O' The Hills*.⁹³ The innocence of Pickford was under threat, both on screen, where Pickford 'makes obvious eyes at John Gilbert,' and off screen with her remarriage.⁹⁴ Pickford could be seen in the context of the new modern woman, empowered in business and in her personal life, yet, importantly, the press preferred to

present her as the feisty schoolgirl reinforcing traditional values.⁹⁵ *Variety*, in its review of *Heart O' The Hills*, focused on Pickford's femininity, writing of the 'pretty little dresses that become her' and observing that 'in close-up it is evident that she is making up her upper lip too heavily.'⁹⁶ The press and public wished to preserve Pickford as a symbol of traditional femininity, so that Pickford was not necessarily assuming masculine characteristics, but was rather a feminine figure forced to protect herself and take on a distinctly masculine role.⁹⁷

The appearance of Mary Pickford was undoubtedly vital to the success of this film, and ensured that this presentation of the nightriders was brought to a wider audience. The updated version of the story, *The Hill-Billy*, released in 1924 and starring Jack Pickford in the title role, performed only moderately at the box office, with the *New York Tribune* asking why the film was 'sadly neglected by the ordinarily very active press agency.'⁹⁸ It could be tempting to credit the low-key release in New York to an embarrassment surrounding the Klan by 1924, especially as in California and Sinton, Texas, two areas with an established Klan following, the film 'drew very good attendance.'⁹⁹ Certainly the appearance of a male protagonist within *The Hill-Billy* greatly altered the perception of the story. Both films featured a trial scene, in which all of the jurors (and even the judge in *The Hill-Billy*) confessed to murder in order to see the heroic central character released. In *Heart O' The Hills*, it was the schoolgirl Mary Pickford who was released, but in *The Hill-Billy* it was a strong male figure that escaped without punishment. This is an important shift, altering the perception of the crime (and the night riders). However, *Moving Picture World* reported that 'critics laud *Hill-Billy* at opening in New York' and the critical reception of *The Hill Billy* does not reveal any opposition to the social values of the film.¹⁰⁰ Reviewers certainly did not discuss the night riders in relation to the modern Klan, as the riders were again positioned in a distant setting and time.¹⁰¹ The riders also targeted corrupt individuals rather than generalised groups and avoided the controversial issue of race entirely.

The casting of Mary Pickford ensured that the film of *Heart O' The Hills* offered a far more sympathetic presentation of the night riders than Fox's original novel. In the novel, it was Steve Hawn, the central villain who 'reddened by drink' rode with the

night riders, stealing and abusing power. Fox wrote that 'the night riders had been at their lawless work' and the honourable Colonel Pendleton also complained that 'in the western and southern parts of the state the night riders had been more than ever active.' He added that 'tobacco beds had been destroyed, barns had been burned, and men had been threatened, whipped and shot.' The night riders directly targeted Pendleton; 'sick as he was, threats were yet coming in that the night-riders would burn his house and take his life.' The book also drew a direct parallel between these lawless night-riders and the original Klan, as 'the dormant spirit of the Ku-Klux awakened, the night-rider was born again.' Although the novel, published in 1913, referred to the original Klan, it spoke disparagingly of the values and activities of these night-riding groups, presenting the modern night riders in opposition to the law and also to traditional ideals of masculinity:

The Ku Klux, the burning of toll gates, the Goebel troubles, and the night rider are all links in the same chain of lawlessness, and but for the first the others might not have been. But we are, in spite of all this, a law abiding people and the old manhood of the state is still here.¹⁰²

In the film, the night riders appear as a just and necessary group maintaining law and order within the community. The film script made no direct reference to the Klan, with an early draft referring to 'a secret band of night riders... [who] depend upon the disguise of their masks to protect them from discovery and arrest.' The script emphasised that 'Mavis makes herself a night-rider's costume and when they [the night-riders] gather that night and ride forth, she manages to join them without her identity being discovered.'¹⁰³ After *Birth*, the image of the Klan was so familiar on film that reviewers and viewers inevitably saw the night riders in relation to the Klan, which in 1919 was still a historical group. The presentation of the night riders was positively changed from the original novel. In the novel the activities of the night riders largely served in the background, and the prominence given to the night riders within the film suggests at a popular interest in such exciting groups on screen after *Birth*. The shift

from the male to female protagonist further encourages audience sympathy with the activities of the night riders, and also helps in presenting the Klan to a broader female audience.

In the film of *Heart O' The Hills*, Mavie is not punished for her actions, and after the murder of her Father's killer, an intertitle states that 'Tragedies are quickly forgotten in the mountains.' The music from the film, advertised extensively, concluded with the lines 'Everything came about just as they planned, and they lived happily ever after in the Heart of the Hills.' There are no repercussions for Klan actions, unlike the 1937 Humphrey Bogart film *Black Legion*, in which Bogart is sentenced to a lifetime's imprisonment, even after repenting and revealing the identity of other night riders. *Heart O' The Hills* also crucially plays the courtroom scene as a comic moment, and this use of comedy in dealing with this increasingly volatile subject was apparent in other films of the 1920s, most notably *Lodge Night*. One reviewer remarked that while *Heart O' The Hills* was 'seemingly a heavy drama' there was enough comedy to 'keep the house in a chuckling humor all through the performance.'¹⁰⁴ The dance routine with Jack Gilbert was said to have 'brought down the house everywhere it played.'¹⁰⁵ The use of comedy, the lack of punishment and the presence of Pickford all served to present the Klan as an attractive, largely non-threatening organisation.

Linda Williams has suggested that in melodrama the victim is motivated by their desire to regain a lost innocence.¹⁰⁶ In *Heart O' The Hills*, Pickford's idyllic home and childish life is destroyed by northern capitalists, yet it is a curious paradox that, in order to regain her innocence, Pickford must join the Klan, a killing organisation. Pickford served as the embodiment of purity as a model for Paper Dolls and the Pompeian Beauty Powder adverts, but within *Heart O' The Hills* this image is seemingly threatened by her violent actions.¹⁰⁷ The suggested catch lines for lobby and program advertising included the line, 'Mary Pickford can shoot and she shoots to kill in the story Heart O' The Hills,' while Eileen Whitfield described *Heart O' The Hills* as 'unique in Mary's canon for its casual brutality.'¹⁰⁸ However, Pickford later claimed that she turned down the role of Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*, as 'I wouldn't do that kind of picture, why, she kills a man.'¹⁰⁹ Pickford did not seem to perceive the Klan as an inherently

destructive or dangerous group and evidently did not feel that associating with the night riders compromised her feisty, yet innocent image.

Mainstream industry films throughout the 1920s attempted to present the Klan as a non-threatening group. This allowed for a more genial presentation of the group, making it more accessible particularly to a female audience. Yet this presentation also undermined the threat carried by the Klan. A review for *One Clear Call* explained that the 'Klansman sidle off on their horses without having done much but wave their guns.'¹¹⁰ The Klan does nothing on the condition that the local bar, 'The Owl,' filled with drink and debauchery, shuts itself down within thirty days. The nightriders are presented as reasonable and not simply barbaric, with film, in light of censorship concerns, avoiding showing the destruction and killing associated with the group. In *Shadows of the West*, the American Legion work with existing legal forces, resisting the urge to lynch the Japanese villain after rescuing the female victim. The hero urges the group, 'Men listen- you have done your work well. Now let the law take its course.' The hero explains 'He'll get all that's coming to him I promise you.' The riders then cheer and embrace, with the retribution never actually shown.¹¹¹ After *The Birth of a Nation*, and in light of the emerging, modern group, the Klan was rarely presented as violent, and was not viewed in relation to racial and religious characters. As I have shown, the Klan in many areas presented itself as a moral group, concerned with administering prohibition and reinforcing existing laws. The industry, in part because of censorship concerns but also because of conservative pressures, encouraged a similar idealised presentation of the Klan on screen during the 1920s. This is not to say that all presentations were positive or encouraged audiences to identify with the Klansmen as with *Birth*, but even in apparently negative depictions, the group appeared as this law-enforcing, fraternal group, not driven by racial or religious hatred.

One Clear Call to The Fifth Horseman: The moral Klan

In October 1921, William Simmons, the Imperial Wizard of the Klan, stood before a Congressional hearing and offered a powerful (and very public) defence of his

organisation. At this Congressional hearing, Colonel Simmons claimed that the Klan was 'purely a fraternal and patriotic organisation and is in no sense a regulative or corrective organisation.' Simmons spoke of a group that was 'opposed to a profiteering in race prejudice and religious bigotry,' but admitted that the Klan occasionally assumed 'the role of regulators of public morals and the enforcement of law.'¹¹² At around this time a number of films emerged that featured Klan groups. Franklyn Farnum appeared in the comedy western, *The White Masks*, which was released from November 1921. In May 1922 John M. Stahl released *One Clear Call*, and Jean Paige appeared in *The Prodigal Judge*, while three months later in August, *Big Stakes* was released.¹¹³ *Lodge Night*, an early Our Gang comedy, appeared the following July. In *Lodge Night*, the Klan was presented as a fun fraternal group, unconcerned by race or religion, and serving only to protect the law. *The Prodigal Judge* was set before the Civil War with the Klan appearing as a law enforcing group helping to resolve a land dispute, while in *One Clear Call*, a largely honourable Klan feature, once more serving to maintain law and order in the seedy world of bootlegging and crime. The night-riders within the film do not target any religious groups, and ultimately show compassion towards their repenting target. At the end of the film, it is not the Klan, but their victim, who sees the error of their ways and repents his sins.¹¹⁴ The film's hero Dr Hamilton, as with a number of the westerns featuring the Klan, does criticise the Klan's secret methods, labelling them a 'gang of cowards' for appearing in masks, but he still recognises the role of the Klan in administering justice.¹¹⁵ The Klan are moral leaders, with a review for *One Clear Call* emphasising that the film had a moral 'so exquisitely coated and presented that you're grateful for it.'¹¹⁶

The nightriders were presented in these moral terms, even though large sections of the press were condemning the group. *Competitor Magazine* wrote as early as January 1921 that the 'ignominy and barbarism' of the re-emerging Klan was being 'denounced by the leading people of both races, in speech and editorials, North and South.'¹¹⁷ *The New York World* and eighteen leading dailies published their extensive exposé of the group in September 1921, while in 1922 Mayor John F. Haylan of New York instructed his Police Commissioners to 'ferret out these despicable, disloyal

people' who were attempting to 'destroy the foundations of our country.'¹¹⁸ An editorial in *The New York Times* in November 1923, entitled 'Let the Klan die' spoke of the 'lunatics of the Klan,' who 'must feel their inferiority keenly if they are forced to bond together to save Nordic supremacy.'¹¹⁹ The flawed ideals of the Klan were again presented in Mecklin's study of 1924, which, according to a *New York Times* review, undermined 'every pretension of the Klan.'¹²⁰ In this influential book 'The Ku Klux Klan: A study of the American Mind,' Mecklin dismissed Colonel Simmons' model of the organisation as 'pure idealisation and to all extents and purposes non-existent.'¹²¹

Throughout the 1920s the image and reputation of the modern Klan was heavily contested on a national stage, yet these debates were largely avoided by the film industry. Independent films battled over the representation of the Klan, with Catholic pictures like *The Knight of the Eucharist* (1922), appearing in direct opposition to the vision offered in *The Toll of Justice*, the Klan's own film of 1923. Yet, the industry, when it did present the Klan, largely appeared to support the vision promoted by the Imperial Wizard, William Simmons. This is even apparent within the seemingly negative depictions of the Klan offered in the westerns, *Cotton and Cattle* (1921), *The White Masks* and *Big Stakes*. The Klan within these films still served as a law enforcing, fraternal group. For example, in *The White Masks* a gang of masked riders, known as the 'six-o-one' but recognised as a Klan group within adverts, govern the local western town. *Moving Picture World* explained that 'while their original purpose was protection and not disturbance, they are temporarily under the direction of a degenerate, Jim Dougherty, keeper of the saloon.'¹²² Even in this seemingly negative depiction, the Klan is presented as a protective force, briefly exploited by unscrupulous leadership. This was also shown in *The Cambric Mask*, which was advertised as a 'story of night riders led by [a] cruel desperado.'¹²³ Even in *Big Stakes*, the Klan is not directly criticised, but is rather misused by the corrupt leader Bully Brand. The film opens with a bar room fight between Brand and the American hero, Jim Gregory, over a woman, and it is this personal dispute that motivates the actions of the Klan. Brand is corrupt, yet the rest of the group remain faceless figures that merely follow the instructions of their leader. The group is not shown as inherently wrong, and, while at the end of the film, Bully Brand

receives his due punishment (falling to his death), there are no repercussions for the other nightriders.

During his Congressional hearing, Simmons dissociated the Klan from reports of violence, by claiming that these incidents were carried out by non-Klansmen misusing the Klan costume. Producers also offered this explanation for Klan violence during the 1920s. For example, in *Cotton and Cattle* the villainous leader of the night riders is exposed as an opportunistic local businessman, who wishes to scare Al Hart's character, Bill Carson, off his valuable land. The Klan costume is again adopted, not by genuine Klansmen, but, rather, by immoral figures using it for their own personal gain. Producers were wary of directly associating with the modern Klan, yet by removing the violent actions of the night riders from the genuine Klan, they supported Simmons' logic and presented the Klan as a legitimate moral group, misrepresented by villainous outsiders.¹²⁴

The industry's desire to avoid controversy and conservative criticisms often prevented mainstream producers from directly responding to the modern Klan. When the Klan did feature, censorship further encouraged the presentation of a moral, non-racist Klan on screen. In particular the removal of 'foreign' enemies from the screen aligned the on-screen Klan with the model promoted by Imperial Wizard Simmons. Simmons claimed in 1921 that the Klan was not an anti-Catholic organisation, arguing that only once was anti-Catholic literature circulated, and that the man responsible was banished from the organisation forever. John Mecklin argued in 1924 that it was widely accepted that 'the Klan's anti-Catholic propaganda has won for it more members than anything else,' yet the industry, primarily because of censorship, never presented the Klan as an anti-Catholic group.¹²⁵ Producers therefore had to establish other 'moral' enemies for the Klan.

By 1923, *The New York Times* was reporting that Will Hays had 'undertaken a reform of the villainy of our films,' with the atheist American the only 'safe' villain, as 'all other religions and all other nationalities are sensitive.'¹²⁶ The removal of the religious or racial target made it increasingly difficult to present clearly defined Klan enemies during the 1920s. In *Birth*, race was used to define the villain and, furthermore,

to explain their villainous actions, as Griffith positioned the whites as normal and superior and the non-whites as deviant and inferior. Colour served as a separating device, but by the 1920s the enemies presented must be white Americans, and thus new signifiers were required to reveal this opponent. Furthermore, Hollywood narrative cinema traditionally demanded clearly defined enemies, yet after the Red Scare of 1919, the modern Klan exploited popular fears surrounding the 'enemy within,' the white American citizen (usually a Jewish or Catholic person) undermining the country. This presented a problem for producers, who had to make physically indistinguishable American citizens easily recognisable as enemies. Villains were rarely psychologised characters in early film, and the industry used familiar signifiers in presenting their Klan targets. The Biograph films of D.W. Griffith had shown 'villains' who were representative of a social cause, whether it be the capitalist in *Corner in Wheat* (1909) or the woman drinking in *An Unseen Enemy* (1912). The presentation of the villain drinking was used as an explanation for evil actions, with the gypsy in the British film *Rescued by Rover* (1905), for example, taking a large swig of drink towards the camera after kidnapping a child. There is a broader history within film linking villainy with anti-temperance, which is also evident in *Birth*, and this is extended into many of the films featuring the Klan during the 1920s. Lee Grieveson argued that a number of films from 1908/9 suggest that the 'formation of a particular narrative system around 1908/9 became closely intertwined with the idealization of domesticity.'¹²⁷ From the early example of *The Drunkard's Reformation* (1909), drink served as a threat to domesticity, and the Klan operates as a protective force within this established narrative tradition. Drink is used as a defining feature of the villains, as the explanation for, and signifier of, their corrupt character.

In *One Clear Call* the Klan targets Henry Garrett, the owner of The Owl, a disreputable 'gambling dance and drinking place.' Garrett is attacked because of his profession, with his character defined by a social cause, as he serves purely as an obstructor of prohibition. The intention of the Klan within this film, is the 'virtuous one of closing his (Garrett's) den,' which has 'so incensed the citizens.'¹²⁸ The Klan group in *The Fifth Horseman* (1924) also attacks bootleggers as the enemies of prohibition. In

The Fifth Horseman, the villainous father, Tom is introduced in a seedy saloon ‘shuffling cards. Bleary-eyed and stupid with liquor.’ The script explains that there is a ‘close up of [a] quarter filled whiskey bottle on the table’ and Tom and his accomplices are repeatedly depicted drinking, as Tom steals money from his boy, Sonny in order to fuel his habit. When Sonny finally reacts against his father, he does so by throwing the ‘whiskey bottle down savagely.’ Similarly, when his father is eventually reformed, the script explains that ‘with an oath, he sends the half-filled whiskey glass crashing to the floor and stalks out’ of the saloon. Drink is an important visual motif within these films, and the Klan’s role within *The Fifth Horseman* is almost identical to *One Clear Call*. In *The Fifth Horseman*, a title from the heroic ‘young American’ warns Gorman, the proprietor of the saloon, ‘You’ll either close this place in forty-eight hours or it will be closed for you!’¹²⁹ In *One Clear Call*, Dr. Hamilton is given thirty days to arrange the closure of The Owl, before the Klan will take action. The Klan’s own productions also positioned the Klan as protectors of prohibition, with the villain in *The Toll of Justice* always viewed in relation to drink and introduced in a saloon.¹³⁰ Even in the anti-Klan Catholic production, *The Knight of the Eucharist*, the Klan target not only Catholics but a ‘band of radicals who are involved in bootlegging and city politics,’ while in *The White Masks*, the Klan is under the corrupt leadership of ‘a degenerate, Jim Dougherty, keeper of the saloon.’¹³¹ The villain is again defined by drink and the Klan operates around the established western setting of the saloon.

Historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage believed that the Klan targets in the 1920s were more often ‘whites accused of sexual indiscretions, bootlegging, divorce and other perceived moral failings,’ but there were difficulties even in showing these targets on screen.¹³² *Photoplay*, in criticising the ‘self-righteous, self-appointed, ignorant, holier-than-thou’ censors in 1922, reported that ‘screen comedies touching upon prohibition get hit hard.’¹³³ The Motion Picture Commission in New York ordered two cuts to *One Clear Call* in 1922 before the film could be shown, after the Commission complained that the intertitles were ‘immoral’ and ‘would tend to corrupt morals.’ One line that had begun ‘If there is one among you who one time or another hasn’t patronised a place like this [a saloon]...’ was changed to ‘If any of you has the courage to go in unmasked, and

take him singlehanded - man to man - not by mob violence - go get him.' The Commission objected to the implication that prohibition was a widely broken rule, and appeared wary of showing the moral degradation to which the Klan responded.¹³⁴

Film was often unable to depict the acts that the Klan responded to, and, when it did present prohibition, it was often in different terms to the Klan. *Kourier* in 1925 paraphrased the words of Henry Ford, writing that 'if the opposition to prohibition were analysed, it would be found that it was mainly alien- every true American's heart and soul is for it.'¹³⁵ The Klan still associated prohibition with ethnicity (as *Birth* had done by showing the African American characters drinking), yet film now largely avoided such associations. The villains appeared to be defined purely by their moral failings, and the Klan featured as indiscriminating extensions of the police force. In *Lodge Night* (1923), the young Klansmen catch car thieves, who are described as 'prejudicial against the Police.' The Klan attacks are justified, with *Moving Picture World* describing the murder by the night-riders in *The Hill Billy* (1924) as a 'grand act of courage and sacrifice.' The piece explained that 'Mr Pickford picks up his shot gun and defends his pretty neighbor girl from the evil intent of her depraved cousin.'¹³⁶ These films presented the Klan not as a racist organisation, but as a moral group, seeking to maintain law and order.

The Fifth Horseman, released in 1924, also presented the Klan as a moral group. As I have suggested, the film closely followed the generic mainstream depictions of the Klan, as it defined its villains through drink, and presented an idealised Klan group serving to close down a saloon and reintegrate a drunken father into his family. Although the script did describe one of the drunken rogues, Orloff, as a 'shifty-eyed, foreign type- somewhat rat-faced,' the film largely avoided the issue of race, with its one scene featuring an African American character cut by the Ohio censor board. The industrial and perceived commercial restrictions also ensured that the film never directly referred to the Klan, and the group ultimately appeared as an almost mystical moral and religious force. The presentation of 'the Klan' shared much in common with the other mainstream films, like *One Clear Call*, but the film also closely mirrored the Klan's own films, and was exploited by Klan groups, shown at Klan social functions and

advertised within Klan newspapers. The film was written and directed by E. M. McMahon, who also wrote the music in 1923 to the popular Klan song 'We are all loyal Klansmen.' *The Fifth Horseman* may be viewed as a propagandist film produced by a Klansman, and the difficulty in conclusively categorising the film illustrates the parallels between the Klan's own productions and the mainstream industry pictures.¹³⁷ This suggests that, despite appearing as ideological opposites during the 1920s, the Klan and the industry actually varied far less in their depictions of the Klan than one might naturally assume. This is, as I have suggested, largely because of the industrial restrictions directing presentations of the Klan and race. Yet, producers still attempted to work around these common restrictions, and in some respects *The Fifth Horseman* did differ from other industry films, as it presented the Klan as a religious organisation and emphasised the links between the old and new Klan groups.

The Fifth Horseman introduced Colonel Woodson, 'one of the fast dwindling grey-clad host that followed Lee and Jackson,' who appears mysteriously before Sonny and inspires him to help his father reform. The original Klan, through the image of Colonel Woodson, appears as a mythical deeply religious group, and Woodson 'with deep earnestness' explains the function of the Klan:

Nearly two thousand years ago, Sonny, a man gave His life that you and I might live. Down through the centuries, Christian men and women have struggled to keep alive His great teachings. I was one of thousands who struggled through reconstruction days, to defend the helpless and preserve the sanctity of the home.

The film mythologizes the original Klan and, as with Klan literature, presents the Klansman as a direct descendent of Jesus. The film then cuts to a flashback sequence depicting the night riders in action before a title explains the patriotic function of the Klan; 'We were led by the fifth horseman- for God, our country and our homes!' The Colonel draws a direct link between the original Klan and the modern group. He hands Sonny an American flag and says 'Take it with you, Sonny- and remember- there are millions of men and women determined to uphold that flag with the Spirit of

Righteousness!’ The Klan appears all the more mysterious as the Klansmen are never contextualised within society, with the modern hero referred to throughout as ‘young American’ and defined entirely by his Klan role. Furthermore, the film concludes by revealing that Colonel Woodson is not a real, living person, but rather the embodiment of the spirit and valour of the modern Klansman. The ‘Young American’ explains to Sonny, ‘We have but to seek, and we shall find... the Christly Spirit of Yesterday, Today and Forever!’

This conclusion, with its adoption of a popular Klan phrase, highlights the propagandist value of the film for the modern Klan. This conclusion also once more presents the Klan as a distinctly religious (rather than racial) group. The synopsis of the film, presented with the script, explained that the film ‘is inspired by St. John the Divine’s vision of the Fifth Horseman of the Apocalypse, symbolising righteousness... and therefore giving it a religious background or motif.’ The prologue featured a ‘close-up of St John,’ while the first location was described merely as ‘Biblical atmosphere.’¹³⁸ Colonel Woodson continually emphasises the links between Christ and the Klansman, and Tom is finally reformed after finding a card placed within a copy of the Bible, pointing out verses pertinent to his struggle. After reading the verses, a stage direction explains that Tom ‘raises his eyes from Bible and sits back- a picture of desolation.’

The film, while positively promoting the Klan, still appeared sensitive to the restrictions surrounding depictions of the group during the 1920s, and even the religious elements of the film were heavily underplayed in the promotion of the film. A large advert in Iowa presented as its heading and tagline, ‘The Fifth Horseman not a religious picture’ adding that the ‘key note of this picture... is patriotism.’¹³⁹ By underplaying the historical and religious elements of the story, adverts emphasised the topical relevance of the film, in a manner often avoided by other films depicting the modern Klan. The *Port Arthur News* recognised that this is a ‘story of life in the American home today,’ a ‘strictly modern one of life in America today.’¹⁴⁰ The paper added that ‘while it gets its name and motif from the bible, its story, a gripping drama, replete with romance and stirring conflict, is founded on actual occurrences.’ As I will show the film does appear to target Klan supporters, yet there remains a reluctance to present the Klan within film

in relation to religion. Another advert remarked that this is a film that 'every red blooded American regardless of creed and color should see,' as the film again sought to avoid isolating any section of the film-going public.¹⁴¹ A further advert presented the film instead in terms of national identity, described it as 'America's greatest American picture.'¹⁴²

The Fifth Horseman certainly differed from *The Birth of a Nation* in avoiding directly addressing the Klan as a subject and in removing the issue of race, but the film, like *Birth* and *The Face at your Window*, was still adopted by modern Klan groups. It was not until the 1930s and *Black Legion* that destructive, racially motivated Klan actions were shown on screen. Even the seemingly negative actions of the night riders within the westerns of the 1920s were attributed to one corrupt individual or recognised as the work of villains misusing the Klan costume. Yet for producers, restricted by censorship, the representation of the Klan on screen often appeared less important than the glamorous and exciting image of the white costumes.

I suggested in the introduction to this chapter that the scenes within *Big Stakes* appeared remarkably similar to those within *Birth*, as the white costumes flash across the screen. The representation of the Klan may differ, but the exciting image was still imitated and exploited by producers. *Moving Picture World* did not comment on the representation of the Klan in *Big Stakes*, but did report that 'the scenes involving the white riders add to the spectacular value.'¹⁴³ *Moving Picture World* evidently did not view the Klan's appearance within this comedy western as a social statement on the modern group, but, rather, recognised the value of the Klan in generating excitement within an action sequence. Adverts for *The White Masks* explained that 'a modern version of the once famous Ku Klux Klan is shown,' without making any reference to the apparently critical presentation of the night riders.¹⁴⁴ *The Syracuse Herald* referred only to 'Franklyn Farnum in his latest Ku Klux Klan picture,' while *Sheboygan Press-Telegram* opened its review of *Cotton and Cattle* by exclaiming 'See the Ku Klux Klan of the cotton growing belt.'¹⁴⁵ Adverts for *The Cambric Mask*, also described the film as 'a thrilling Ku Klux Klan story' and a 'thrilling play of Ku Klux Klansmen.'¹⁴⁶ A further advert in *The Kingston Daily Freeman* wrote:

The Ku Klux Klan of the South- the band of white robed nightriders' stirring adventures trying to rid their country of the great dangers to the white race. For thrills, action and suspense, see this exciting photoplay.¹⁴⁷

The advert was again less concerned with the representation of the Klan than with the excitement generated by the appearance of the night riders. The advert bore little relation to the night riders within the film (who were not presented in relation to race) and, throughout this period, producers and exhibitors emphasised the action rather than the function of the Klan. The parallels drawn between *Birth* and *In the Clutches of the Ku Klux Klan* in 1915, had also largely failed to note that in the latter film, the heroine Gene Gauntier was actually captured and imprisoned by the Klan in the belfry of an old church. Reviews noted once more that there was a 'wealth of exciting interest' in the film, but the common mistaken assumption that *In the Clutches of the Ku Klux Klan* was actually an edited version of *Birth*, further suggests that it was the presence, rather than the function of the Klan, that was of more interest to contemporary reviewers and audiences.¹⁴⁸

After *Birth*, a fear of censorship restricted the role and positioning of the Klan within mainstream narratives, but producers were still motivated by a commercial desire to exploit the popular imagery of the Klan. In 1917, the Klan image appeared in *A Mormon Maid*, a film 'daringly depicting the ruthlessness in enforcement of polygamy by the avenging angels.'¹⁴⁹ The Klan group was renamed as the avenging angels, and was positioned in the far west 'beyond the furthest outpost of civilization.' It appeared as an antebellum group, and, as it was not presented in relation to African-American targets, the costume was safely distanced ideologically from the Klan within *Birth*. However, producers and exhibitors highlighting the parallels with the Klan costume in *Birth*, as a title within the film claimed that 'this costume, but with a cross substantiated for the "eye", was later adopted by the Ku Klux Klan.' Richard Alan Nelson in his study of the film notes the 'clear (though now largely forgotten) derivation' from *Birth*, but suggests that this connection was manufactured, as producers 'sought to tie-in to the

earlier blockbuster's success.'¹⁵⁰ An advert in *The Kansas City Star* described the film as a 'sequel to "Birth of a Nation",' and adverts for the film looked to exploit this familiar image, with a white robed rider on top of a horse.¹⁵¹ *The Greenville Morning Herald* in Texas headlined a report on the film, 'Ku Klux in a Mormon Maid' and an article in the *Oakland Tribune*, entitled 'Has Ku Klux Klan', discussed the parallels between the costume of the avenging angels and the Klan. The article suggested that 'A Mormon Maid shows that the mysterious costumes of the K.K.K. is [sic.] an exact replica of the "avenging angels",' outlining that 'the mysterious garb of the Ku Klux Klan stories which have thrilled booklovers' was 'copied from that of the Mormons of antebellum days.'¹⁵² The commercial attraction of this familiar Klan costume was noted by reviewers, with *Wid's* writing that 'the fact that the production shows the Mormon guards in the white-robed costume of the clans in *The Birth of a Nation*' gives this an added interest.' The review added that 'by intelligent use of the Mormon guards costume... you should be able to do a lot of business with this.'¹⁵³

Once more the costume and image of the Klan appeared more important than the values and ideals associated with the group. *Variety* commented that *A Mormon Maid* occupied 'the same relation to Mormonism that *A Birth of a Nation* does to the colored question.'¹⁵⁴ Yet, in *A Mormon Maid*, the hooded riders appear as a negative bullying force, enforcing a second wife on Mae Murray's father, chasing her family as they attempt to escape the community and lasciviously following Mae Murray ('Take her to my wives- they will care for her'). This appeared less important to reviewers and exhibitors than the excitement generated by the Klan costume. Posters promoted the '1000 actors and night riders' and once more highlighted the 'sheer excitement' of the riding scenes. An advert in Ohio explained that 'the whole horde of night riders in pursuit makes a succession of dramatic climaxes, which for sheer excitement have rarely been equaled on the screen.'¹⁵⁵ Exhibitors and publicists prioritised the familiar image, and any consideration of the representation of the hooded riders was further undermined by the film's final image, which presented a man in the Klan costume embracing the heroine. In this case it was the heroine's father, John Hogue, who had adopted the appearance of his enemies in order to protect his daughter, but the image of

the tall robed man (with his hood now removed) embracing the heroine is unmistakably similar to the triumphant conclusion in *Birth*.¹⁵⁶

A Mormon's Maid emphasised its social relevance, as it was widely presented under the auspices of the anti-Mormon league, and in some instances, for example in Sandusky Ohio, the film catered exclusively 'for adults.'¹⁵⁷ For the most part, however, the Klan costume featured predominantly as a spectacle in youth-orientated genres, appearing in westerns (*Big Stakes*), children's comedies (*Lodge Night*, *Young Sherlocks*), and even in Disney cartoons (*Alice's Mysterious Mystery*, 1926). The appearance within these youth-orientated genres helped in avoiding censorship, and further encouraged the depiction of a generic, exciting Klan group. Producers, while wary of censorship, were still motivated by a commercial desire to exploit the popular interest in the Klan, and thus the Klan costume featured within an action sequence that was often removed from the main narrative of the film. This was certainly noted by reviewers, with *The New York Tribune* complaining of the Klan presence within *One Clear Call* that 'there doesn't ever seem to be any reason for the things the people do; they just go ahead and do them because it will make a good scene.'¹⁵⁸ *The New York Times* also appeared to suggest that the Klan scenes were superfluous to the film's narrative, complaining that 'action that should be merely incidental to the main plot is stretched out and emphasised.'¹⁵⁹

'Mystery-Thrill-Love': The Klan as spectacle¹⁶⁰

Variety wrote of *One Clear Call* that it had 'everything that goes to make a successful screen production,' including 'wandering boy and blind mother bit, comedy and a touch of Ku Klux Klan that serves as a thrill.'¹⁶¹ This perfectly describes the use of the Klan on film in the 1920s, not as the subject but as an interluding sequence of action that offered excitement. An advert for the film in *The Lincoln State Journal* contained the heading 'Night Riders!' beneath which it said 'Whoop! What a thrill when they come roaring down for vengeance! Hundreds of them, bringing drama, action, tingling sensation.'¹⁶² A review for the film in Texas appeared under the headline 'Ku

Klux Klansmen provide screen thrills.’¹⁶³ Not every successful screen production appeared to feature a wandering boy and blind mother bit, but during the 1920s mainstream film producers, seeking to appeal to as broad an audience as possible, used the familiar white Klan costume as a source of action within all encompassing films.

Posters for *The Hill-Billy* broke the film up into four sections, ‘Melodrama, Action, Comedy and Thrills’ with the comedy supplied by an ‘acting bear that keeps everybody a chuckle between roars.’¹⁶⁴ The film was described in *Motion Picture News* as ‘Real Drama packed with thrills, comedy and romance,’ while *The Prodigal Judge* was advertised as ‘An All American drama of heart throbs, thrills and real comedy.’¹⁶⁵ A poster for *Heart O’ The Hills* featured Mary Pickford fishing, dancing, night-riding, ‘in love’ and ‘consoling her mother’ as films sought to appeal to every potential cinemagoer.¹⁶⁶ *Big Stakes* offered ‘action-thrill-humor-logic,’ while *One Clear Call* was said to include a ‘laugh, a tear, or mystery in every foot of reel.’¹⁶⁷ An advertisement for the film in Chicago did not mention the Klan, but underneath a small picture of a nightrider were three words, ‘Mystery-Thrill-Love’ as the film attempted to encompass all of these qualities within the one film.¹⁶⁸ *Moving Picture World* emphasised the broad appeal of these films, when suggesting advertising angles for *The Cambric Mask* in 1919. The paper advised exhibitors to ‘stress the fact that this is a strongly romantic story with vivid action and a well-marked heart interest,’ further advising exhibitors to ‘play up Miss Joyce, but do not neglect to let your public know that this is from a story by Robert W. Chambers.’ Certainly the night riders were one of many aspects to exploit, but their image featured prominently in some posters, and *Moving Picture World* recognised that ‘the masked riders will give the production popular appeal.’¹⁶⁹

During the 1920s, there were a number of industrial and commercial factors restricting a presentation of the Klan, as I have suggested, yet producers still appeared eager to exploit the topical interest in the Klan. The Klan featured within *The Prodigal Judge* (1922) even though the story was set before the Civil War. *The Indianapolis Star* praised the film’s presentation of the period, but commented that the ‘incident of the Ku Klux Klan is surely an anachronism.’¹⁷⁰ The group again featured as an action sequence in a film that produced ‘a tear, and a laugh, exciting, spectacular scenes, interspersed

with quiet humor- in fact everything that goes to make a perfect picture.'¹⁷¹ The peripheral night-riding scenes within John Fox Jr.'s novel 'The Heart of the Hills' were certainly afforded far more prominence in the film, as Mary Pickford's character Mavie now rode with the night riders. Frances Nimmo Greene 'outlined a new plot' for the 1922 version of her 1914 novel 'One Clear Call,' which now featured modern Klansmen.¹⁷² The film was fictionalised in *Photoplay* in 1922, with the new plot featuring 'that mysterious organization, the Clan.' The film now emphasised and exploited the excitement generated by the Klan and in particular the Klan costume:

And one night the white-robed, masked body gathered outside the city, and swept through the streets. Somewhere the cry started, "The Clan is raiding the Owl," and spread on the wings of feverish excitement.¹⁷³

Earl Wayland Bowman's original short story, 'High Stakes' from 1920, did not address the modern Klan, but the 1922 film version, *Big Stakes*, added an entire subplot and lengthy end sequence involving the Klan and a villainous love rival. In the short story, the action was supplied when El Capitan 'took the pick of his soldiers,' who appeared as 'black shapes' to capture Senor Skinny, the story's hero.¹⁷⁴ In the film, the central hero, now named Jim Gregory, having completed the plot outlined in the original story, now fought with El Capitan against the Klan, which was attempting to capture and kill an American love interest. Earl Wayland Bowman was certainly not impressed by the changes made to his story. Having sold the story for 'practically nothing' he soon broke off all dealings with the 'indescribable' producers, complaining 'of course it ['High Stakes'] will be butchered.' His mood was hardly improved on seeing the finished film:

It was not as bad as it might have been but it was bad enough to make me swear. I told the producer that no other bunch would ever put another of my stories on the screen unless it had been shot under my direction. They simply have not sense enough to see the really big things in the story.¹⁷⁵

Producers, while reluctant to present the modern Klan as the subject of a film, did look to incorporate the topical Klan into film and in particular used the exciting imagery of the Klan within brief action sequences. D.W. Griffith had commented on first reading “The Clansman” that ‘I could just see these Klansmen in a movie with their white robes flying’ and the distinctive Klan imagery was perhaps most powerful during the era of silent, black and white film, as the riding white costumed figures were instantly recognisable and frequently brought immediate responses from the audiences.¹⁷⁶ The Klan offered excitement in all of these films, regardless of the presentation offered, with even *The Symbol of the Unconquered* said to contain ‘hard, hard riding (which) furnishes the picture with the amount of exciting action required to make the blood tingle through your veins at high speed.’ The action is later said to be ‘full of speed, interesting and exciting’ as even within films, such as *Big Stakes*, offering a negative presentation of the group, the Klan was presented as a source of action and fascination.¹⁷⁷ An intertitle within *Big Stakes* explained that events are ‘guided by the unseen hand of Brand, the secret leader of the Night-Riders,’ with the title emphasising the mystery and suspense surrounding the organisation (‘unseen’ and ‘secret’).

The Klan was by its very nature mysterious and full of action, and film presented the Klan in these terms, regardless of the sympathies displayed towards the group. In the 1921 Buster Keaton comedy, *The High Sign*, the hero inadvertently meets up with the Blinking Blizzards, a group described as a ‘murderous secret society.’ The secret society provides high speed action, with Keaton finding comedy in the rituals of the group. *An Eastern Westerner*, a 1920 Harold Lloyd film, sees Lloyd battling with a ‘western version of the Ku Klux Klan,’ referred to within the film as the ‘masked angels.’¹⁷⁸ The masked angels are introduced as ‘men who have broken eight commandments and twisted the other two,’ but, as with *Big Stakes*, the film presents a central villain, in this case “Tiger Lip” Tomkins, who uses the group for his own personal gain. His motives work directly against the ideals of the Klan, as he grabs the innocent heroine and says ‘I want that girl- and what I generally want I generally get.’ The film again does not directly refer to the Klan, and in many respects supports the notion that opportunists and

enemies of the Klan were adopting the Klan costume for their own personal gain. Yet the representation and ideals of the group would appear less significant in this comedy short, than the excitement generated by positioning this group as an action sequence at the film's conclusion.

An Eastern Westerner was a Hal Roach film, and two of his Our Gang comedies also exploited the mystery and excitement generated by the Klan costume. *Young Sherlocks* (1922) did not directly refer to the Klan, yet the symbols of the Klan and the white robes were used as reference points.¹⁷⁹ In this film, the gang works as detectives and form a secret society called the J. J. J.'s (Jesse James Juniors). At one point an intertitle from Jackie reads, 'We gotta put on disguises- an act creepy,' as the white robes and hoods are put on. The Klan costume is commodified on film, generating mystery and excitement, yet these films largely avoided questioning or even considering the motives behind the group. In *Lodge Night*, the children dress up in white robes and take part in a high speed car chase, but huge emphasis is again placed on the childish rules, rituals and names within the club. The initiation ceremony centres on the customary fat kid being kicked and punched. This glorified bullying appears as an extension of childish playground games, with the group presented as a fun, male fraternal group. The costume is again on display, and its use within a mainstream children's comedy shows how well recognised and established the Klan was within society.

Hal Roach also produced the 'Snub' Pollard short from 1921, *Law and Order*, which was, according to *Camera*, 'a satire on the activities of the Ku Klux Klan.'¹⁸⁰ In *Law and Order*, a group of car thieves 'to protect themselves, "desert the poolrooms" and form a Klan.' The Klansmen are exposed as car thieves, yet two years later in *Lodge Night*, the Klansmen catch car thieves. The Klan is presented in a modern context within these comedies, yet the representation and social message within the films appears far less significant than the use of this exciting, topical subject. In *Law and Order*, Pollard's character, the district attorney, accidentally finds the costume of the 'Chief Ku Klux' and he rides out in disguise to collect evidence.¹⁸¹ The excitement is again generated through the familiar imagery, with Pollard having a 'thrilling time avoiding the noose of

a rope.’ The Klan is presented as a controlling influence within society, but the threat and danger associated with the Klan is largely nullified by its presence within these children’s comedies. The Klan costume is desensitised as it becomes accessible and removed from the terror of the racist group presented in the liberal press. In *Kid Speed* (1924), the white sheet that falls on Larry Semon terrifies the African-American, yet the fact that this gag is offered suggests that this fear was controlled and a generalised reaction. The costume (with a smile drawn onto it) was used for comic effect. The producers appear to have succeeded in one respect in removing the costume from the modern Klan, as ultimately the costume becomes representative of broader ideas (mystery and excitement) rather than of a specific group or ideology. The associations with the modern group may be exploited, but ultimately the costume is removed from the specifics of the modern Klan, as the values and motives of these groups are overlooked.

The Klan costume was also used within Disney cartoons. In *Alice and the Dog Catcher* (1924), a film that combined live action with animated footage, the figures wear grocery bags over their heads, with the rituals of these secret societies again exploited. In this film, Alice presides over a secret club and dons its costume in order to rid the town of dog catchers and free the dogs, while in *Alice’s Mysterious Mystery* (1926), Alice and her accomplice Julius save the imprisoned dogs from a ghoulish character robed like a Klan member. The costume was used both by the heroine and the enemy, to free and capture the dogs, with positive and negative associations offered. Once more the representation of the Klan was less significant than the use of this commodified costume, which was evidently accessible and exploited within these children’s films. Contemporary reports largely dismissed these Klan appearances and did not perceive them to be representative of the modern Klan, to a large extent because of the genres in which they featured. Looking at these films generically can therefore help to explain both the reception of these Klan appearances, and also the industry’s dominant representation of the Klan, as an exciting, mysterious, but largely non-violent group.

The Disney cartoons and Hal Roach comedies would appeal predominantly, although not exclusively to younger audiences. The Klan also featured within the western, for example in *Big Stakes*, which was described as the 'First in a series of six Westerns in which J. B. Warner is starred' and in *The White Masks*, 'a big Western picture in five parts with all your favorite Western players.'¹⁸² A survey in 1923 revealed that the western was the most popular genre amongst young boys, while an earlier survey in *Everybody's Magazine* in 1919 concluded that 'the backbone of today's business is the attendance of young people from seventeen to twenty-three years of age.'¹⁸³ Producers adopted the Klan costume as an exciting image for young audiences, and in doing this, further distanced the group on screen from the debates surrounding the modern Klan.¹⁸⁴

The genres in which many of these Klan appearances featured may have ensured that representational associations between the group on screen and the modern Klan were largely overlooked, with more emphasis placed on image than ideology. Producers and exhibitors, in often emphasising the emotional human interest and artistic merits of these films, did not purposefully highlight the escapist genres in which the Klan featured, in order to avoid controversy or censorship.¹⁸⁵ Yet by positioning the Klan within the remote western setting, producers offered a world far removed from modern urban America, and further distanced the on-screen Klan from the modern organisation emerging in the news. Virginia Wright-Wexman observed that the western displaces 'the issue of racial difference onto the past,' so that although it represents ongoing concerns, as with the Civil War genre, it positions the issues in a nostalgic past.¹⁸⁶ Presenting the Klan within a western framework helped to underplay the social relevance of the Klan appearances, and the ideology and setting of the western offered a comfortable home for the Klan on screen.

Vigilante violence: The Klan and the western

The western, as a genre, broadly responded to concerns prevalent in American society at the turn of the century, such as Darwinism, a fear of increased immigration

and urbanisation. These concerns, prevalent within society, had led to the popularisation of a memorialisation of the Civil War and contributed to a re-emergent Klan, so that the western was borne out of the same concerns that brought forth a new Klan.¹⁸⁷ While the western was certainly not entirely homogenous or fully codified, films categorised as westerns did appear to endorse the patriotic ideals and traditional land based values of the Klan. *The Covered Wagon* (1923), the most successful of all silent western epics, was constantly promoted as a successor to *Birth*, and reviews emphasised that the film was 'sweeping in its power to stimulate patriotism... a living throbbing page from history'. 'No one can sit through a showing of this picture without leaving the theatre a better American,' said one reviewer, highlighting the film's value in promoting American ideals.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, the established code of conduct within the western helped to legitimise the work of the Klan and of vigilante groups within American society.

I have already suggested that early film established vigilante justice as an accepted response within rural communities to moral failure. I wish to consider now how this moral code featured within the western, and how in turn the Klan as a group operated within this framework. The presentation of the Klan as an exciting vigilante force was popularised in cinematic terms by *Birth*, a film that, according to *Variety*, always contained 'that kick or thrill that no other special feature or general release has had.'¹⁸⁹ *The Birth of a Nation* had marked the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Civil War and served as the culmination of the memorialising that had dominated American culture since the 1880s. The film and the Civil War setting emphasised traditional values that were intrinsically linked to the Klan, highlighting the importance of land, honour and the home.¹⁹⁰ By the 1920s the noble and chivalrous portrayal of the Civil War seemed out of touch with the reality of lost sons, mustard gas and trench fighting, and the Klan was no longer viewed in relation to this earlier period.¹⁹¹ The Civil War setting faded, but the ideals of this genre and the social attitudes displayed within the Civil War films, in particular the promotion of 'the unwritten law,' continued within the western.¹⁹²

The western set up vigilante justice and revenge as a necessary means of law enforcement. For example in *The Virginian* (1923), the audience knows who lynched the Virginian's friend, yet as the hero says, 'we can't prove it.' The film promotes the necessity for alternative forms of law enforcement. Virginia Wright Wexman argued that the hero in the western acts as judge and executioner, and that the courtroom is used in the western as a place of 'buffoonery and corruption.'¹⁹³ In the example of *Heart O' The Hills*, Mavie is reared in a 'bizarre atmosphere of western lawlessness' and eschews any established legal forces to take revenge on her father's killer.¹⁹⁴ Mavie is unpunished by the courts in a comic scene, as the entire jury claims responsibility for the night riding murder in order to ensure that Mavie is released. Peter Stanfield, referring in particular to westerns of the late thirties, recognised parallels between the Klan and western figures in 'the use of extrajudicial means to right perceived wrongs.' Stanfield highlighted that the hooded riders within a number of westerns 'offers strong visual parallel to the Ku Klux Klan,' and suggested that their shared support for vigilante violence and use of 'theatrical disguises... creates an uneasy symbolic relationship.' The traditional ideals and extrajudicial function of the Klansmen would appear ideally suited to the western, and the western setting appeared to offer a framework in which the idealised Klan could operate.¹⁹⁵

William Everson noted that William Hart's westerns invariably ended 'by linking the villains with the saloon and the good guys with the church.'¹⁹⁶ The idealised Klan, depicted for example in *One Clear Call* or *The Fifth Horseman*, operated as a moral group, enforcing the closure of saloons and seeking to promote prohibition. It would thus appear to fit positively within this clearly defined moral structure. Furthermore, the western encouraged the rescue of females, often threatened by 'foreign' races. Joanna Hearne wrote that 'westerns portrayed the frontier as a proving ground where white women, threatened or taken captive by Indians, were the objects of spectacular rescues by white men.'¹⁹⁷ This 'spectacular rescue' of the threatened white woman inspired the Klan within *Birth*, but producers appeared to present the Klan more often within the western, not as rescuers, but as enemy assailants, carrying out the orders of the central villain. As I showed in the earlier example of *Big Stakes*, the Klansmen

operate as the threat to, rather than protectors of, female innocence. Likewise, in *Cotton and Cattle* (1921), the corrupt leader of the night riding group, Buck Garrett attempts to assault the innocent female, Ethel. Garrett also frightens the 'colored pickers' and burns their huts to the ground. The film constructs a clear contrast between the cowboys and the night-riders, who are presented once more as a product of the South. *Exhibitors' Trade Review* began its review of the film by commenting that '*Cotton and Cattle* might also be entitled *When West Meets South*,' while *Sheboygan Press-Telegram* presented 'Night-riders of the South vs. cowboys of the West.'¹⁹⁸ The Klan (or at least the Klan leader) was also presented not in opposition to the saloon within these films but rather as a drunken figure or proprietor, seemingly operating as the antithesis of Simmons' idealised Klan.

In *The White Masks*, Franklyn Farnum played 'a wanderer' Jack Bray, but his western hero appeared in direct opposition to Jim Dougherty and the 'crooked work of the gang' that Dougherty led. Similarly in *Big Stakes*, a film advertised as a 'wholesome, clean, American comedy drama,' J.B. Warner's character, embodying these patriotic values, directly opposed the Klan group.¹⁹⁹ Hugh Van Allen in *The Symbol of the Unconquered* embodied the self-sufficient western hero, yet he appeared in opposition to the Klan. Certainly the individualism of the western hero was often positioned against the largely faceless mass (represented by the hooded group). A number of westerns, for example *The Night Riders* with Harry Carey, presented the individual fighting in this case 'a gang of night-riding bandits' as the night riders provided a contrast for the usually lone western hero.²⁰⁰ This contrast appeared to highlight the weakness, or at least cowardice, of the opposing leader, who used the night riders to fight his own battles. The depiction of the Klan group as an apparently negative force within the western was not necessarily symptomatic of an ideological shift in attitudes towards the Klan, but rather the southern mass of night riders provided an attractive opposition to the lone western hero. As I have highlighted, these films did not depict the Klan group as inherently evil, but rather as a tool manipulated by a corrupt leader. In *Big Stakes* and *The White Masks*, the western hero opposed the leader of the

group on a personal level as a love rival, and the group, devoid of their own ideology or individuality, provided support.²⁰¹

Wexman's work on the early western considers the perpetual struggle between 'equality and superiority,' as the western character emphasises his superiority as a white male, but also supports the American notion that all people should be treated equally.²⁰² The western often ends with an assimilation of races, and is able to resolve ideological contradictions at the conclusion of its films, in a manner that would be complicated by Klan involvement. For example *The Iron Horse* (1924) contains a collection of ethnic jokes, aimed notably at the Irish, but at the end of the film, all groups are united, as an Italian worker says 'Me- I, Irish now too.' This racial assimilation threatens the clear racial and religious distinctions made by the Klan, and, as Hearne suggested, the western constantly presents 'unclear racial boundaries.' She highlights the fluidity of racial identity, referring to 'an unsettling of Indian identity, and of whiteness in the formation of the Western genre.' Hearne argues that 'Indianness' can be 'acquired and cast off through one's personal contacts... or through one's performed identity.'²⁰³ The concept that racial identity can be altered through marriage, or even through costume and appearance, threatens the clear racial boundaries established by the Klan, but also responds to the Klan's own fears. The modern Klan targeted 'the enemy within,' often a Bolshevik Jew or Catholic, who operated unnoticed within society and who was not easily definable by their physical appearance. The western may therefore illustrate and exemplify the Klan's own concerns about miscegenation and racial identity, but Klan discourse does not allow for the assimilationist ideology that dominated within the western.²⁰⁴ As I have suggested, producers avoided presenting the Klan costume within a racial context, even within the western, and so the Klan group is often removed from the main narrative of the film. The Klan features not as western heroes, but rather as an exciting group, carrying out the work of the villainous character.

The western provided an opportunity to position the popular and exciting night-riders within a brief action sequence, and the seemingly sympathetic presentations within very similar scenes in *Heart O' The Hills* or *One Clear Call* would suggest that the representation of the Klan was less important than the excitement and action

generated by the Klan appearances. Exhibitors emphasised the Klan scenes regardless of the function of the group, and they heavily exploited the popular interest in the group. This reworked exciting image, operating within youth-orientated genres, may have enabled producers to dissociate the night riders on screen from the modern Klan, yet exhibitors appeared much keener to emphasise the links between the two. What was avoided on screen, in light of censorship concerns, was often positively emphasised off screen. This is not only apparent in films such as *One Clear Call* that feature nightriders, but even in films that appear to bear no relation to the group. The Klan is exciting and dangerous, and while this may restrict presentations on screen, it appears to positively encourage exploitation off screen.

‘Look out bootleggers: K.K.K.’: Exploiting the Klan²⁰⁵

An advertisement for the Henry B. Walthall feature *One Clear Call*, in *The New York Times* in June 1922, featured a picture of a Klansman on a horse. Underneath the picture was a boxed caption, urging the reader to ‘See the Night-Riders.’ The advert offered little insight into the plot, characters or setting of the film, instead using the presence of the Klan within the film to sell the picture.²⁰⁶

The Klan appeared in little more than a supporting role yet, in Boston, a poster advertised the film by emphasising the ‘hundreds of mystic midnight riders.’²⁰⁷ First National advertised the film on one sheet as ‘a gripping tale of masked avengers in a wild night ride’ and although some areas did not refer to the Klan directly, exhibitors looked to exploit the interest in night riders, after the success of *Birth* and after the emergence of a new Klan.²⁰⁸ *Kinematograph Weekly* recognised the attraction of the Klan’s on screen appearance, suggesting that ‘the introduction of the Ku Klux Klan will also have an appeal to many now that the party is again prominent in the daily news.’²⁰⁹ An exhibitor in Tennessee acknowledged that the popular interest in the Klan was boosting the film’s success, noting that ‘we played it while the newspapers were full of K.K.K. stuff and the Ku Klux end of the picture drew them in fine.’²¹⁰ Exhibitors often emphasised the Klan scenes, with a large advert for *One Clear Call* in Wisconsin

stating, 'We present The Ku Klux Klan in a screen drama ever to be remembered, *One Clear Call*.' The words 'Ku Klux Klan' and the film title appeared in a much larger font, with the Klan involvement now prioritised.²¹¹ The emphasis placed on the Klan scenes by exhibitors certainly suggested that the topical nature of the organisation could be a help as much as a hindrance to a film's success. Even in Kingston, Jamaica, the Klan scenes were emphasised, although on this occasion the Klan was defined through its association with the Jamaican born black nationalist, Marcus Garvey, as adverts in 1923 exclaimed 'See the working of the famous KU KLUX KLAN which Marcus Garvey got mixed up with.'²¹²

Exploitation surrounding *One Clear Call* positively emphasised the Klan scenes, and exhibitors often generated an association with the modern Klan, even using local Klan groups to promote the film. In Amarillo, Texas for example, a promotional campaign was arranged with the local Klan. The manager at the Fair Theatre, who organised this promotion, produced an enlarged photo of the local Klan as part of an elaborate but 'inexpensive' lobby front. The display highlighted the words 'One Clear Call,' 'Ku Klux Klan' and '1,000 riders' in bold lettering, while cut outs of masked riders' stood out boldly at each side of the entrance and on the sidewalks.' This display would appear to specifically target a local Klan audience, and the Amarillo Klan generated even more publicity for the film (and for itself) by using six of its men to ride around the streets on horses in Klan robes, for five days before the film. Exhibitors exploited the topical interest in the Klan, but such promotions would also appear to legitimise and increase public awareness of the local Klan group.²¹³

A.P. Desormeaux, the manager of the Strand theatre in Madison, Wisconsin, concocted an even more elaborate publicity campaign, which again exploited the public fascination with the modern Klan. He sent a picture of a Klansman to a number of local officials and businessmen. No explanation was offered, and according to *Motion Picture News*, this stunt made the front pages of the local papers. A few days later a 'lone horseman, masked, wearing white robes, appeared and rode around the capital square.' The man was taken to the police station for questioning, before Desormeaux revealed that this was all a publicity campaign for *One Clear Call*, which was opening at the

Strand Theatre on the following night. This revelation generated further publicity for both the film and the modern Klan.²¹⁴

The use of nightriders to publicise *One Clear Call* again borrowed from the exploitation traditions of *Birth*. For the première of *Birth*, horsemen were hired to dress up in Klan regalia and restage the film's ride of the Klan through a New York park. Seven years later a 'troop of gowned knights' paraded outside the Strand Theatre on Broadway for the release of *One Clear Call*.²¹⁵ The Klansmen, with film banners draped over the horses, appeared in front of a substantial crowd, although in 1922 this was no longer a historical re-enactment, but rather publicity from an active, modern group. I have suggested that producers were often heavily restricted in their depictions of the Klan on screen, and in some instance theatre managers also appeared sensitive about using modern Klansman to promote the film. In Winston, Salem, North Carolina, the manager of the Auditorium Theatre 'got over the Ku Klux Klan effect of "One Clear Call" without the use of nightriders.' He used large displays, which *Motion Picture News* suggested were very effective 'when it becomes impossible or inadvisable to use the street ballyhoo.'²¹⁶ In, Bellingham, Washington, the manager of the Liberty Theatre 'used the Ku Klux Klan rider on the streets,' adopting this now-popular publicity device, but according to *Motion Picture News*, the manager 'took care to have the rider dressed in a garb that did not resemble the costume of any known organization.'²¹⁷ This may appear a paradox but, while theatres were keen to exploit the mystery and excitement associated with the generic Klan costume, in some areas managers were reluctant to align their theatre directly with the local, modern Klan. The film, when promoted by and aligned with local, modern Klansmen, may be reinterpreted as a Klan text, specifically targeting and attracting audiences sympathetic to the modern Klan.

In regional areas with a strong Klan following, the Klan elements were often emphasised more prominently. In Indiana, *One Clear Call* was advertised as a story of 'night-riders [of the] Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,' with adverts exclaiming 'Whoop! What a thrill when they [night-riders] come roaring down for Vengeance!'²¹⁸ The film was shown at the Opera House, the venue for *The Mysterious Eyes of the Ku Klux Klan* three months earlier, with the exhibitors appearing to specifically target the large Klan

following in this area. *The Fifth Horseman* was produced by a New York company, but appeared predominantly in areas of Texas, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio. In Texas, the local setting was emphasised, with a review stating in the title that the 'author of the picture [was a] native of Texas.'²¹⁹ In the Mid West, the film appeared to directly target Klansmen, with Klan groups in Indiana organising screenings of the film as a fundraiser and as a publicity device. As an example, the Marion County Women's Klan group organised and sponsored a run of *The Fifth Horseman* in Indiana in 1925 that was advertised in *The Fiery Cross*, while the Jackson County Klan planned to show the film at its large Konklave in 1925.²²⁰ The film was often advertised in similar terms to the Klan's own films, with adverts containing the caption 'Like a Cloud by Day and Pillar of Fire by Night.'²²¹ The phrase 'Pillar of Fire' was widely used within Klan literature. The Klan elements were emphasised throughout the country in order to draw audiences to the mystery and excitement associated with the group, but in areas with a strong Klan following, the adverts did appear to appeal more directly to Klan supporters.

I suggested in the opening chapter that *The Birth of a Nation* was closely aligned to the modern Klan during the 1920s, and exhibitors often emphasised this link. The Arcade Theatre in Jacksonville, Florida showed *Birth* for a fourth time in 1923 and the film did 'as strongly as if it was a first run' earning as much money as the most popular new films of the year. *Moving Picture World* outlined the promotional campaign used at this theatre, commenting that the exhibitor 'did not specifically pin his campaign to the K.K.K., but on the other hand, he did not go out of his way to avoid mention.' This would appear an understatement as the chief lobby display consisted of a flaming cross in a shadow box. On either side of this were 'Klansmen bearing fiery crosses and outside of these a pair of Confederate flags.' The report recognised that the film was presented in relation to the modern Klan, with the paper commenting on the 'surprisingly large number' of advertising cards that shop owners agreed to place in their windows. The inference was that by putting up a film card, the shop owner revealed his support, not simply for the film, but for the modern Klan. Even the Salvation Army helped with promotion by putting out 6000 throwaways for the film.²²²

Exhibitors evidently recognised that the presence of the Klan would provide great interest for the audience, with a number of films that did not feature the group, exploiting the exciting image of the nightrider. The manager of the Bijou Theatre in Racine, Wisconsin 'used the masked riders - ordinarily associated with "One Clear Call"' to promote the Norma Talmadge film *Smilin' Through* in 1922. The masked men travelled the streets in cars 'ready to jump out at any moment' and take photos. The photos were included in a 'Best Smile' competition, which the theatre manager had organised. This particularly curious piece of exploitation may suggest that the Klan costume was commodified and desensitised but, according to the theatre manager, interest in the Klan (and the mystery and excitement generated by the costume) 'aroused tremendous interest' and provided 'about 200 inches of free publicity space' for his theatre.²²³ A catalogue of other films with no discernable link to the Klan appeared to utilise the Klan's image. The display for *Connecticut Yankee* (1921) featured a horse covered up in white, while the posters for *I Am the Law* (1922) showed men on horses, looking distinctly like night-riders. For the Sennett one-reeler, *One Spooky Night* (1924), performances were staged outside the theatre involving these 'ghosts,' all dressed in white sheets. Even the white flags and army from *The Thief of Baghdad* (1924) bear a strong resemblance to the Klan, as exhibitors exploited the exciting image of the Klan.

As well as using the Klan costume, exhibitors also exploited the reputation and popular interest in the modern Klan. In Ohio, a well-established centre for Klan activity in the early 1920s, exhibitor George J. Schade utilised the public fascination with the Klan in a number of elaborate campaigns. In 1923, when painted signs appeared all over Sandusky, Ohio reading, 'Look out, bootleggers. K.K.K,' newspapers speculated on the forthcoming Klan activity. However, the sign was merely a publicity stunt from Schade for a new film, with the completed sign revealed a few days later reading, 'Look out, bootleggers. Every K.K.K. will see Within the Law. Schade Theatre, Sun., Mon., Tues.' This Norma Talmadge film had no connection with the Klan, but Schade used the public interest and mystery surrounding the Klan to draw attention to his theatre program.²²⁴ Exhibitors exploited the image of the Klan, as a mysterious, exciting and

dangerous group, yet such campaigns suggest that the Klan (in these local areas at least) was a controlled commodity, a symbol of fear and mystery rather than a greatly feared institution. The Klan in Ohio was a powerful institutional force, and yet its image was gently mocked in order to promote a motion picture.

George Schade evidently recognised the interest surrounding the Klan in Ohio and used this for his advantage once more when promoting *The Christian* in 1923. The local Klan had built a fiery cross out on the ice in a lake, and set a second cross ablaze on a neighbouring hill. Schade, having noted the excitement and publicity generated by these Klan displays, produced his own thirty-foot cross, electrically lighted, which he placed on top of his theatre. The citizens of Sandusky immediately assumed that all of the crosses were part of a campaign to promote this new film. Schade claimed cheap yet valuable publicity, as the discussions and excitement generated from these original displays were transferred into conversations about Schade and this new film.²²⁵ The Klan was used for a further stunt in Ohio in 1923 when The Dome Theatre in Youngstown placed an advert in a Klan paper 'inviting the Knights of the Invisible Empire to meet the two best known Jews in the world face to face.' It is unclear what happened at this meeting, but *Moving Picture World* recognised that, although 'it was a daring stunt, the gag worked' as it raised the profile of the theatre and brought increased business.²²⁶

These elaborate publicity stunts were not exclusively the domain of local, independent theatre owners, with the larger studios also recognising the potential appeal of using the Klan within publicity campaigns. One such campaign began when a hundred leading citizens in San Francisco received warning letters from the K.K.K. which, according to *Moving Picture World*, they promptly showed to friends and police. A week later the first of a set of three large 24-sheet stands appeared, reading 'Prepare! K.K.K. is coming!!' The following week the name of Loew's Warfield Theatre and a date appeared on the sheets. Further posters appeared with the three K's, and the same date and theatre printed, as speculation mounted within the local press that the Klan may be preparing to rent out the theatre for a demonstration. On the date specified, curious citizens flocked to the theatre, but found no evidence of the Klan. Instead they saw

Three Ages, a new Buster Keaton comedy. The exhibitors explained that K.K.K. had actually stood for Keaton's Kolossal Komedy and that the whole campaign had been a stunt to attract audiences to the film. The publicity generated sparked interest not only in the film but also in the Klan. This was not an isolated campaign, and incredibly this initiative was originally suggested in the Metro press book for *Three Ages*.²²⁷

Film Daily reported the same campaign in Nashville, Tennessee, 'based on the K.K.K. stunt mentioned in the Metro press book.' It reported that the most effective aspect of the publicity was the mail campaign. Citizens received a letter, written in bold red letters over the entire page, warning 'Prepare K.K.K. Is Coming!' The following day they received another letter reading 'Nashville Will Soon Know The Power of K.K.K.' *Film Daily* commented that 'by this stage curiosity had turned to the keenest anticipation not unmingled with a little anxiety ... wherever two people got together the conversation immediately turned to the K.K.K.'²²⁸ Once more the stunt provoked interest in the Klan, yet it also reveals the contradictory attitudes towards the Klan. Metro exploited the apparent fear and mystery surrounding the Klan, yet evidently this fear was controlled, as the studio was comfortable playfully mocking the image of the group. It is an irony that once this Klan image becomes commodified as a source of danger, in many respects it loses this quality.

It is significant that a major studio should mock and exploit the image of the Klan so publicly. An apparent taboo on film, studios (and independent exhibitors) appeared less reticent in using the group for publicity. Exhibitors clearly recognised the commercial appeal of the Klan, using the distinctive imagery and mystery to promote films, many of which had no discernible link with the group. It is a contradiction that underscores the appearances of the Klan throughout the 1920s. The dangerous, topical nature of the Klan was construed as both a positive and negative for the industry. Publicity and Exhibitor displays attempted to draw attention to the Klan elements, making associations that were often not blatant, or were positively underplayed by producers. This exploitation of the Klan suggests once more that it was the industrial and commercial factors (censorship, controversy after *Birth*, and the need to attract young audiences) that were restricting presentations of the group, as there was evidently

a demand and desire to use this Klan material. The exploitation also reveals once more a close relationship between the Klan and cinema, with exhibitors using local Klan groups on occasion for publicity, while the Klan also legitimised and publicised itself through a close association with local theatres.

At the height of the Klan's popularity (and profile) there was the greatest desire to exploit the Klan on film, yet, while the Klan was topical, the subject could not be easily addressed on screen. When *The Mating Call*, directed by James Cruze, was released in 1928, *Variety* complained that the 'subject of the K.K.K. is pretty blah. for dramatic purposes at this late date anyhow.'²²⁹ The Klan had gained some recent publicity, as it strongly and publicly opposed the Presidential campaign of the Catholic Al Smith, but, as a national organisation, the Klan had been fading over the past couple of years. The high profile murder trial of former leader David Stephenson was the most prominent example in a series of very public Klan misdemeanours that had served to undermine the values of the Klan. Government policies, such as the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, which heavily restricted immigration, also appeared to reduce the demand for the Klan. Nancy MacLean, for example, noted that 'by 1926, observers around the country were reporting smaller numbers [of Klan members] and dwindling influence.'²³⁰ The relevance of the Klan as a subject for film was now questioned, but with this subject now less socially relevant, were producers more willing to present a detailed, critical study of the Klan?

The Mating Call

The Mating Call was described by the trade journal *Harrison's Reports* as 'controversial in nature' and certainly the presentation of the Klan was still a cause for concern in 1928. The publication appeared particularly worried about offending local chapters of the Klan, warning exhibitors 'If you are in a Ku Klux Klan territory you should first find out whether you should show it or not. If you cannot show it, resort to arbitration proceedings to be released from the obligation of playing it.'²³¹ A Texas exhibitor claimed in *Exhibitors Herald-World* that the film 'handles the Ku Klux angle

wonderfully, both Klux and Anti-Klux can see this picture.'²³² The Klan as a national organisation was heavily on the wane by 1928, yet there does still appear to be a concern about audience responses to these images, with *Variety* suggesting that 'the value of this [Klan sequences] may be doubtful.'²³³

The censors also remained wary of Klan appearances on screen, and suggested a number of cuts to *The Mating Call*. The Motion Picture Commission in New York ordered the producers at Paramount (among them Howard Hughes) to 'eliminate all views of the meeting of [the] hooded order where [a] large assemblage of men in hoods are distinctly shown.' The memorandum went on to explain that 'this will include all close views of [the] head of [the] order questioning men brought before him, ordering men to be whipped, men shown tied to [a] cross and beaten with [a] whip by hooded man, and all accompanying sub-titles relating to the scene.' The censors objected both to the appearance of a socially active Klan group, and also to the violence now shown on screen. The reason for the elimination of these Klan scenes still owed much to *The Birth of a Nation*. The Commission believed that 'scenes of [a] masked hooded order unlawfully dispensing justice- will incite to crime and tend to corrupt morals.'²³⁴ The Klan was seen as a dangerous subject because its appearance could encourage imitation, as had been the case when the new Klan had emerged alongside the glamorous presentation offered in *Birth*.

The adaptation of *The Mating Call* from Rex Beach's 1927 novel also highlights some of the other industrial concerns that directed presentations of the Klan on screen during this period. In the original novel, the central hero Leslie Hatten, discussed at length the motives, morality and function of the Klan, but the film, released a year later, does not refer directly to the Klan. The film instead, as *The Warren Tribune* noted, shows the 'Ku Klux Klan thinly disguised as The Order.'²³⁵ According to *Variety*, the film now features a 'suggestion of the Ku Klux Klan,' while most of the hooded group appear in black robes.²³⁶ The novel had presented the Klan as a 'ghostly looking group' in its familiar white robes, and this shift may seem surprising given the popularisation of the Klan image on screen earlier in the decade.²³⁷ This shift may be explained, in part, in terms of generic convention, as traditionally the black costume signified the villains

within the western, but producers may also have been concerned about using the Klan costume within this seemingly more adult orientated film. As the *Black Legion* case illustrated, the Klan had also recently taken out a patent on its costume and it is conceivable that producers were aware of the potential legal difficulties in presenting the Klan on screen.

The issue of race was also largely removed from the screen adaptation of *The Mating Call*, with all African American characters removed entirely. In Rex Beach's original novel, the Klan appeared to directly target African Americans, with Double R, an African American who works for Hatten on his farm, explaining his motives for moving there: 'the Ku Klux riz up an' burned a cross an' I moved out here.' Double R further credits the sudden departure of a succession of Hatten's workers to the Klan, stating 'it may have been the Ku Klux. They're [African American workers] always talking about it.' Double R does not feature at all within the film, and the Klan's other modern racial opponents are also largely overlooked. In one lengthy exchange within the novel, regarding the function of the modern Klan, Marvin Swallow, the deputy Sheriff, compares the modern racial enemies with the carpetbaggers of the Reconstruction era; 'The carpet baggers ran things in those days. Now it's the Jews, the Catholics, and the niggers.' Furthermore, the reason for the Klan's attacks on Leslie Hatten also appears to shift slightly from page to screen. The warning letter posted on Hatten's door appears racially motivated within the book, as it reads:

TAR AND FEATHERS!

This is a decent community. The woman who is living with you is not wanted here any longer.

First and last warning.

K.K.K. ²³⁸

The woman referred to is a Russian immigrant, but in the film, the Klan appears ostensibly once more as a moral group concerned about traditional family values. The

note in the film is left before he meets his Russian bride and responds to his perceived relationship with the married Rose Henderson:

It is the duty of this organization to protect the honor of our homes.

Your relation with a certain married woman must cease.

The Order.

The Klan in the novel does admit that it is most concerned with the issue of adultery, but the removal of racial targets from the film encourages the presentation of the Klan group as a purely moral organisation, who 'are supposed to pay threatening calls upon any man who has been attentive to another man's wife.'²³⁹ Yet although the Klan was not seemingly racially motivated on screen, the issue of adultery, and in particular the purity of womanhood, was intrinsically aligned to issues of race. The American woman within the film, Rose, is the embodiment of the dangerous modern woman, sexually driven, adulterous, and constantly moving outside of the home. Previously married to Leslie Hatten, before her parents had her marriage annulled, Rose has subsequently married Lon Henderson. This does not stop her making wild advances at Hatten on his return from War, and Hatten, disgusted by the immorality of this modern American woman, decides that he needs a hard working, domesticated, appreciative wife ('a real woman who wants a home - and is willing to work for it'). Hatten decides that he can only find this woman at Ellis Island, and in a curious scene (even within the context of this film) he prevents a European woman and her family from being deported, in exchange for marriage. This foreign woman proceeds to run Leslie's household, cooking and cleaning, as she assumes the traditional American matriarchal role. She appears vulnerable and in need of her husband's protection when she is drawn outside of the domestic space, and her feminine character appears to re-enforce the clear gender boundaries threatened by modern society.²⁴⁰ It is this immigrant character that now embodies the values so cherished by the Klan, while the threatening vamp character is now presented as an American.²⁴¹

A more thorough reading of the film would therefore suggest that the film addresses and seemingly challenges popular attitudes towards race. The removal of the racial target on screen may ensure that the Klan within the film appears to target Leslie because of his perceived adultery, but Leslie's marriage to a foreigner encourages viewers to see him (and the Klan's attacks) in a racial context. For example, *The Kansas City Star*, having explained that Hatten 'goes to Ellis Island and marries a peasant girl,' suggested that 'such un-American conduct' (the marriage of an immigrant) 'arouses the ire of the local Kleagles' within the film. Furthermore, Thomas Meighan, who played Leslie within the film, was a prominent Catholic figure, who had served as President of The Catholic Motion Picture Actors Guild, when it formed in 1923.²⁴² The Klan's attacks on Leslie can therefore now be viewed within the context of the modern Klan's very public attacks on Catholics within America, exemplified by its highly publicised and virulent criticisms of the Catholic Presidential candidate Al Smith.

As the presentation of the Klan was still monitored and restricted by 1928, it is perhaps unsurprising that the depiction of the Klan within *The Mating Call* should still share much in common with the earlier films. The film may present the faceless figures of the Klan in direct opposition to the film's central hero, Leslie Hatten, but the Klan group is not depicted as an inherently evil group but, rather, as in *Big Stakes*, *The White Masks* or *Cotton and Cattle*, the group is the victim of a corrupt leader. At the film's conclusion the Klan is not brought down, but rather, on learning the truth about its leader, it seeks to exonerate Leslie, the falsely accused hero. As in the earlier westerns, the Klan is not punished for its actions, while the heroic central character, despite being whipped on the cross repeatedly, appears to accept the Klan's role as a moral force within society. The film also continues to justify the use of vigilante violence. After the murder of Henderson, the adulterous head of 'the Order' who is now blamed for the suicide of a young local woman, the Klan group works to ensure that the murder looks like suicide, so that, as in *Heart O' The Hills*, no-one is convicted of this apparently justified murder. The acting head of 'the Order' further illustrates the common acceptance of vigilante justice when he says to the suspected assassin, 'If you didn't kill him, you should have.'

I would suggest that these thematic consistencies across a range of films are largely the product of industrial and commercial considerations directing film during the 1920s. However, Rex Beach's original novel also shared much in common with the earlier films, and the presentation of the Klan group offered within his work may suggest a broader social acceptance of the Klan, or at least highlight the established literary and cinematic conventions within depictions of the Klan. Rex Beach's novel displays an established affection for the original Klan, reinforcing the presentation offered in *Birth*. Hatten remarks that 'the original Ku Klux Klan was a necessity, and it was forced on us people of the South as a defensive measure.' The novel also largely avoids direct criticism of the modern Klan, instead suggesting that the negative racial activities within the book are committed, not by the genuine Klan but by corrupt individuals. When a Klan group visits Double R in the night, Marvin says 'they're not real Ku-Kluxers ... They're just plain rowdies.' Furthermore, when Hatten receives his warning note on his front door, he immediately dismisses this as the work of imposters, believing that genuine Klan proceedings 'were characterized by a certain dignity.' The genuine Klan, according to Swallow, 'was made up of the very best people; ministers, judges- people like that whose motives were patriotic and whose actions were above suspicion.' Hatten, as a Klan target, is ostensibly the most prominent critical voice against the Klan but, as he explains 'I don't object to the principles the Klan advocates, but I don't favour the enforcement of these principles by secret influence or mob violence. It's too dangerous, too hard to control.' It is not the morality or ideals of the Klan that are criticised but rather the inherent problems caused by self-appointed regulators, with Rose also remarking that 'that's my only objection to the Klan- its altogether too secret.'²⁴³ This highlights a perceived problem with the Klan that is addressed in a number of these films. Through its anonymity, the Klan invites imitation, but this anonymity also provides a valuable defence for any wild activities by the group. The Klan certainly presented this defence in its own films, but the industry also avoids directly confronting or criticising the modern Klan, by positioning the Klan costume on corrupt locals. As film broadly prioritised the image, rather than ideals of the Klan, any criticisms of the modern Klan were directed not against the values and ideals of the

group, but rather at the possible misuse of the costume by corrupt groups and individuals.

On screen, *The Mating Call* presents an established and organised Klan group that listens to the cases of those brought before it before deciding to administer punishment. The Klan hears the defence of a 'shiftless, drunken reprobate' who goes out getting drunk while his 'mother hasn't enough to eat.' It appears as a paternalistic, fair group, telling this man 'You're dismissed - but improve your ways. We'll be watching you.' The group does whip a man, but only after he unashamedly admits to beating his wife. The violence within the film may hint at a shift to the more adult and barbaric depictions that would subsequently appear in the social problem films of the late 1930s, like *Black Legion*. This more violent presentation would appear to be shaped by the genre in which the Klan now featured and by the film's intended audience. At the height of its popularity, the Klan costume appeared largely within escapist, youth-orientated genres, but publicity for *The Mating Call* aligned the film with Thomas Meighan's last picture for Howard Hughes, the tough gangster film, *The Racket* (1927), with reviews discussing *The Mating Call* as a 'sincere piece of work.'²⁴⁴ *The Mating Call* appeared to cater for a more adult audience and, while this may have made the film potentially more controversial and objectionable for censors, it also encouraged the producers to present a more violent, menacing group. This violent presentation was still restricted as the censor report from New York indicated, and I would still suggest that in 1928, *The Mating Call* shared more in common with the moral drama of *One Clear Call* than the later social problem films of the 1930s. The *Southtown Economist* referred to the 'bouts with the Ku Klux Klan, and other exciting adventures' and the Klan once more featured as a sequence to generate excitement within an all-encompassing film that was widely promoted for its romance and drama.²⁴⁵ *The Mating Call* still did not address the Klan in the detailed and critical terms of later films, and reviewers suggested that these Klan sequences once more seemed removed from the film's main narrative. The *New York Times* review commented that 'it looks very much as though a great deal of superfluous matter had been packed into *The Mating Call*.'²⁴⁶

The official publicity material explained that *The Mating Call* 'has a military angle to which not too much attention should be given,' and the Klan sequences were evidently just one aspect of the film that could be exploited. This quotation may suggest that producers were concerned about emphasising the violent Klan sequences, but evidently producers and exhibitors recognised the excitement and interest generated by the Klan's appearance, as a recommended catchline read, 'Hooded terrorists in thrilling night-raids, whippings and kidnappings are seen in *The Mating Call*.'²⁴⁷ Reviews and publicity materials still largely ignored the representation of the Klan within *The Mating Call*, instead emphasising the excitement generated by the hooded group. A publicity report from Paramount headed 'Terrorists furnish climax,' stated that 'the activities of a band of hooded terrorists provide a spectacular climax to Thomas Meighan's latest photodrama.' This publicity did now appear to highlight the social relevance of these scenes slightly more than in the earlier examples, writing that these scenes offer a 'realistic reproduction of methods used in the South to preserve the so-called moral welfare of a community.'²⁴⁸

The Mating Call represents a transitional point in the industry's presentation of the Klan. By presenting the Klan as a largely idealised moral group within a rural southern setting, the film shared much in common with the earlier pictures, such as *One Clear Call*. The Klan group is again not presented as inherently evil, but, as in the earlier westerns, is the victim of a corrupt leader, and the film does not ultimately challenge or criticise the use of vigilante violence within rural America. The Klan, as in the earlier comedies, generates excitement, and again features as an action sequence, largely (if not completely) removed from the main narrative of the film. The censorship and exhibitors' concerns surrounding the film highlighted the continuing restrictions facing any depiction of the Klan, but the film, while still removing the African American characters, does appear to challenge popular attitudes towards race and womanhood. The more violent and detailed depiction of the group also hints at a changing presentation of the group, as the film targets a more adult audience. In chapter five, I will further consider the importance of genre in presentations of the Klan as,

during the 1930s, the Klan was repositioned within the social problem film, and producers now embraced the topicality and social relevance of the Klan.

The 1920s perhaps offered the last period in which a sympathetic presentation of the Klan, as a necessary vigilante group, was possible. However, these mainstream films would appear not so much to reflect social attitudes, than to highlight the industrial and commercial restrictions dominating film after the War, so that these mainstream films may ultimately reveal more about the film industry than the Klan. Certainly the continued legacy of *The Birth of a Nation* shaped the representation of the Klan within these films, as a fear of controversy and censorship meant that the group was now removed from its racial context, positioned in a distant time and setting and often not referred to on screen as the Klan. The Klan group thus predominantly featured as this non-violent, moral group during the 1920s, which was closely aligned to the idealised model presented in the Klan press, in Klan-made films, and by William Simmons at the Congressional hearings in 1921. Even in seemingly negative depictions of the Klan, the group is still presented as a moral group, exploited by a corrupt leader who misuses the Klan costume for his own personal gain. The films, in presenting the negative Klan actions as a misuse of the Klan costume, appear to distance these corrupt actions from the genuine Klan. Furthermore, by presenting Klan misdeeds as the responsibility of corrupt individuals, rather than the group itself, the films appear to defend the modern Klan against the negative criticisms appearing regularly within the press.

The representation of the Klan may be significant in promoting the Klan as a legitimate moral vigilante force, and in defining and glamorising the Klan to a broad audience. Yet ultimately it would appear that audience identification (whether we ride with or against the Klan) is less significant to producers and exhibitors, than the excitement generated from the image of the Klan. The Klan costume is used to create excitement and mystery regardless of the depictions of the group, and in prioritising the Klan image, producers largely overlooked the social function of the Klan as a group. The role of the Klan in modern society is discussed and fought over in the press, but the film industry does not encourage active debate over the modern Klan. The Klan is able

to directly confront and criticise the film industry as I showed in the last chapter, but the industry does not offer an outlet for direct attacks on the modern Klan.

However, film would still appear to serve as an important medium in debates about the social function of the modern Klan, as the Klan and its religious and racial opponents looked to use film themselves at the height of the Klan's popularity, producing, exhibiting and exploiting film in an attempt to instigate social change and promote audience activity. I have already suggested that the Klan exploited and adapted mainstream films but how successful were the independent productions of the Klan and its opponents in actively debating the social function of the Klan? Mainstream productions such as *A Mormon Maid*, *Bolshevism on Trial* and *Big Stakes* attempted to reinterpret and commercially exploit the imagery of the Klan within *The Birth of a Nation*, but marginalised groups (the Klan and its opponents) appeared to contest and debate the representation offered within *The Birth of a Nation* more virulently. Oscar Micheaux directly referred to *Birth* in publicity materials for *The Symbol of the Unconquered*, presenting his film as a response to Griffith's polemic, while Klan filmmakers used the film as a template and as a comparative selling device for their own works. For mainstream films, censored and fearful of further unrest, the reception and controversy surrounding *Birth* restricted future presentations of the Klan and prevented any direct response to the film, but independent filmmakers appeared more eager to exploit the film and to actively engage in discourses around the modern Klan. As early as 1921, Edward Young Clarke was discussing the possibility of producing a Klan propaganda film and, over the next five years, a number of other ambitious and influential Klan figures, such as David Stephenson, embarked on film projects. These independent Klan films not only sought to respond to criticisms of the modern Klan, but also sought to define and promote the group, to recruit members, and to commercially exploit the popular fascination with the modern Klan.

¹ Anthony Slide is one of the few writers to consider the representation of the Klan on film during the 1920s. He highlighted 'four feature films with major Klan depictions in the 1920s', which he lists as *The Knight of the Eucharist* (1922), *One Clear Call* (1922), *The Fifth Horseman* (1924), and *The Mating Call* (1928). He suggested that of these four 'two presented the organization favorably and two negatively, which is possibly indicative of the strength of the Klan in American society.' Slide infers that social pressures influenced the industry's representation of the Klan, but he fails to consider either how the antagonistic relationship between the industry and the Klan impacted on the representation of the group or how concerns over censorship directed these mainstream depictions. By grouping the films according to positive and negative depictions, he also overlooks the often complicated, multi-faceted representations offered within these films. See Anthony Slide, *American Racist: The Life and Films of Thomas Dixon* (University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 173-4.

² Certainly, reviewers and filmgoers often viewed depictions of the Klan after 1915 in relation to Griffith's work. An example of this comes from a syndicated article that marked the release of the latest Henry Walthall feature *One Clear Call* in 1922. In the article, the writer asked 'Were D.W. Griffith to remake *The Birth of a Nation* to what extent would he change the spectacular clansmen scenes in view of recent progress in photography and the technical details of picture making?' The article recognised that producers still sought to exploit the popular Klan imagery used within *Birth*. On this occasion, the writer uses the comparison to consider the 'improvement of screen technique' whereas I am more interested in the ideological changes in the representation of the Klan on screen. See 'Ku Klux Klansmen Provide Screen Thrills', *Mexia Evening News* (10/8/22), 2.

³ Trade Journals were littered with reports of bans against *Birth* during the 1920s, with the film taken off the market in California in 1921, banned in Minneapolis in the same year, while the Mayor of Boston, an area with a large Catholic population, suspended the license of a theatre owner who planned to show the film.

⁴ I will discuss the censorship of independent films in the next chapter. These included *The Mysterious Eyes of the K.K.K.* and *The Traitor Within*, which were both banned in Ohio, and the anti-Klan Catholic film, *The Knight of the Eucharist*, which was refused a license by the Motion Picture Commission in New York. Industry films, like *One Clear Call* and *The Mating Call* also received cuts, in part because they addressed the subject of the Klan.

⁵ *Atlanta Constitution* (26/12/15). The paper outlined its attitude towards the Klan, which appeared to share much in common with the presentation offered within *Birth*; 'The Ku Klux Klan, originally a splendid organization formed after the civil war by property owners for protection against ignorant and superstitious negroes later degenerated into bands of outlaws which the government eventually broke by armed force.' The action appears to take place after the scenes depicted in *Birth*, with an earlier advert in *Frederick Daily News* 20/10/13) explaining that the film focused on the 'last exciting days of the famous Ku Klux Klan.' *The Constitution* further revealed that 'the story takes place in North Carolina, where one of the strongest outlaw Klans flourished.'

⁶ The film played at The Empire in Frederick, Maryland in October 1913. It was advertised as 'Warner's Great Feature' and was described as a 'thrilling tale of those terrible days.' *The Frederick Daily News* (20/10/13). *The Frederick Post* (20/10/13), 2. Richard Alan Nelson stated that Gene Gauntier had earlier penned *The Northern Schoolmaster* in 1909, which was advertised in *Moving Picture World* as 'a powerful story of reconstruction days in the South, and depicts a raid of the Ku Klux Klan.' The film offered a sympathetic presentation of a persecuted Northerner heading south. See Richard Alan Nelson, *Florida and the American Motion Picture Industry 1898-1980* (Garland Publishing inc.: New York and London, 1983), 394. For review and advert, see *Moving Picture World* (10/4/09), 429, and (17/4/09), 477.

⁷ *Fitchburg Daily Sentinel* (6/11/15).

⁸ Sumiko Higashi, *Cecil B. DeMille and American Culture: The Silent Era* (University of California Press, 1994), 137.

⁹ *Kansas City Star* (16/1/21), 14C. *Oakland Tribune* (13/3/18), 11.

¹⁰ The advert appeared in *Sandusky Register* (15/4/19), 2. *The Syracuse Herald* (4/5/19), 77. *Stevens Point Daily Journal* (17/8/20), 3. In this final advert, the film is called 'The Eyes of Truth'.

¹¹ *The Syracuse Herald* (4/5/19), 77.

¹² 'The Cambric Mask', *Wid's Daily* (30/3/19), 19.

¹³ *Kansas City Star* (13/6/19), 25.

¹⁴ *The Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette* (10/7/19), 10. *The Deming Headlight* (20/6/19). *The Lincoln Evening State Journal* (7/8/19, p.3) described the film as 'the timeliest picture ever screened.'

¹⁵ Kevin Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence* (Jonathan Cape, 1990), 444. The film once more shows the Klan imagery from *Birth* repositioned within a fresh social context.

¹⁶ *Heart O' The Hills*, *Bolshevism on Trial* and *The Cambric Mask* are all based on novels released before 1915. This further suggests that the Klan depicted is a distant outdated group, and by 1919 the Klan was not viewed in modern terms.

¹⁷ Kevin Brownlow also noted that Pickford was 'dressed like the Ku Klux Klan'. See Kevin Brownlow, *Mary Pickford Rediscovered: Rare Pictures of a Hollywood Legend* (Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1999), 168.

¹⁸ Leslie Debauche, 'Mary Pickford's Public on the Home Front' from *Film and The First World War*, edited by Karel Dibbets and Bert Hogenkamp, (Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 149.

¹⁹ *New York Age* (25/12/20). Micheaux thrived on making his films relevant, with his 1922 film *The Dungeon*, dealing with the then pending Dyer anti-lynching bill.

²⁰ Henry Sampson, *Blacks in Black and White: A Source Book on Black Films* (Scarecrow Press, 1995), 272.

²¹ Jacqueline Najuma Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity* (University of California Press, 2005), 224.

²² 'Film Censors and Other Morons', editorial from *The Nation* (12/12/20). This can be found in *Cinema Nation: The Best Writing on Film from 'The Nation'*, ed. Carl Bromley (Thunder's Mouth Press: Nation Books, 2000), 63.

²³ 'Detroit Prohibits Ku Klux Film', *The New York Times* (18/9/21), 21:3.

²⁴ On closer inspection it is apparent that the censorship of *The Symbol of the Unconquered* was directly linked to issues of race. Charlene Regester reports that Rev. Bowling, the sole African American member of the Chicago Board of censors, was the only person to view *Symbol* when it was submitted. His revisions addressed 'racist' elements of the dialogue and scenes of interracial relations. See Regester, 'Black Films, White Censors', in *Movie Censorship and American Culture*, edited by Frances Couvares (Smithsonian, 1996), 170.

²⁵ 'The Face at Your Window', *Wid's Daily* (14/11/20), 19.

²⁶ 'Some Short Reels', *Wid's Daily*. Law and Order Copyright material 17084 (12/10/21), accessed at the Moving Image Section, Library of Congress.

²⁷ *Coshocton Tribune* (24/12/22), 12. *Sheboygan Press-Telegram* (23/12/22), 14.

²⁸ *The New York Times* (5/12/22), 24:3. 'Griffith's "Birth of a Nation" Remains "The Daddy of 'em All"', *Variety*, (8/12/22).

²⁹ 'Ku Klux Klan Comes to the Ideal Theatre Tonight', *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (17/1/23), 4. The article does not reveal the name of the 'one exception'. Not all reviews and adverts mentioned the Klan scenes, but this high-profile release prompts comparisons with *Birth*.

³⁰ Koszarski (1990, p.202) discusses the different restrictions faced in each state, claiming that Kansas was very strict on the display of bootleg liquor, Maryland blocked all neck kissing, while New York was strict on 'allowing any ugly remarks to be passed about politicians in general'. *Photoplay* (10/22) also ridiculed the work of the state censors, writing that 'a husband wasn't allowed to pull the curtains down in his own home in Chicago' and 'the words 'wild oats' aren't allowed in Pennsylvania.' As the restrictions varied on a state and municipal level, it was often safer to remove potentially controversial subjects from the screen entirely.

³¹ 'Detroit Prohibits Ku Klux Film', *The New York Times* (18/9/21), 21:3.

³² *File of The Motion Picture Commission of the State of New York* (8/22), Serial Number 5715. The film was presented again to the Commission a year later as *The Mask of the Ku Klux Klan*, but again the commission refused to accept it, 'because it shows meetings of a masked organization which committed deeds of violence.' Evidently a depiction of the Klan (particularly as a modern, violent group) was a problem for censors.

³³ *Moving Picture World* (10/6/22), 579.

³⁴ *Motion Picture News* (3/6/22), 3020-3021.

³⁵ It is of little significance whether the African-American believes he has seen a ghost or a Klan member, as the Klan themselves intentionally dressed to resemble ghosts.

³⁶ All quotes from the film are taken from the film's script, which was accessed at the Moving Image Section, Library of Congress.

³⁷ *The Fifth Horseman* was approved with this cut on 17/11/24. *Ohio Division of Film Censorship Records* held at Ohio Historical Society.

³⁸ William Dunning spent his entire career at Columbia University, becoming a professor in 1893. In his book *Reconstruction, Political and Economic, 1865-1877*, published in 1907, he argued that segregation was essential, arguing that 'the freedmen were not on the same social, moral and intellectual plane with the whites.' His proposals for a union of North and South were entirely at the expense of the African-American.

³⁹ Claude G. Bowers, *The Tragic Era: The Revolution after Lincoln* (The Literary Guild of America, 1929). Bowers also offered a romantic view of the original Klan, writing that 'when the Klan began to ride...white woman felt some sense of security.' David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963* (Henry Holt, 2000).

⁴⁰ 'Strut Miss Lizzy Review', *New York Herald* (20/6/22), 8.

⁴¹ Anne Douglas noted that 'the race riots and disturbances of the day – more than twenty in the summer of 1919 alone- all started with violence on the part of whites against blacks.' See Anne Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 325. The worst outbreak though was in Chicago, where thirty-eight people were killed and a further five-hundred and thirty-seven injured.

⁴² Will Hays remained an unrepentant enthusiast for *The Birth of a Nation*, writing in his autobiography of 'Griffith's genius and new dignity for the screen.' The removal of the racial enemy was driven more by a fear of unrest and external pressure on the industry, than by broader changing attitudes. See Will Hays, *Memoirs* (Doubleday, 1955), 467.

⁴³ 'None but Native Villains', *The New York Times* (2/8/23), 14.

⁴⁴ Nickeanne Fleener-Marzec, *D.W.Griffith's The Birth of a Nation* (Arno, 1980, p.366) reports that the footage shown was of Hampton, as Booker T. Washington didn't want the Tuskegee institute associated with the film. He was concerned that including scenes of Tuskegee would cause more harm, firstly by seemingly endorsing the film, and also by offering an opportunity for censors and supporters of the film to defend the racism within the picture. Fleener-Marzec suggests that this was ultimately the case, with the epilogue serving to block censorship and give legitimacy to the film. John Hope Franklin (*The Massachusetts Review*, 20:3, 1979, p.427) wrote that 'for co-operating with Dixon in this undertaking [the epilogue], the white President of Hampton was bitterly criticized by the same blacks and whites who had so severely criticized the film.' Silva and Cripps also report that the footage shown was of Hampton, and was filmed and prepared as early as 1915.

⁴⁵ Charlene Regester recognised the problems with Bowling's appointment; 'On the one hand, he served as a representative of the entire African American community. On the other, he was the vehicle by which the white power structure attempted to bridge the gap between the two communities.' See Charlene Regester, 'Black Films, White Censors', in *Movie Censorship and American Culture*, edited by Frances Couvares (Smithsonian, 1996), 170. The fetishised African-American victim, served up in *Birth*, and at the numerous public lynchings, could no longer be shown in this manner during the twenties, although Minstrelsy did present the 'erotic' other for white voyeuristic pleasure.

⁴⁶ Steven Ross quotes William De Mille, who recognised the value of the Red Villain in his memoirs *Hollywood Saga* (E.P. Dutton, 1939, p.134); 'We have to have villains, and there was that tremendous land, far too busy to protest and containing one hundred and sixty million potential menaces.'

⁴⁷ Steven J. Ross, *Working Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (Princeton University Press, 1998), 141.

⁴⁸ Lester Friedman, *Hollywood's Image of the Jew* (Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York, 1982), 3. Adolph Zukor, Jesse Lasky, Samuel Goldwyn, Louis B. Mayer, Irving Thalberg, William Fox, and Jack Warner all held prominent positions within the industry, whether as producers, exhibitors or distributors. Many studio backers were also Jewish with Goldman and Sachs at Warner Brothers and Kuhn and Loeb at Paramount.

⁴⁹ See Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (University of California Press, 1996).

⁵⁰ Diane Negra, 'Immigrant Stardom in Imperial America: Pola Negri and the Problem of Typology' from *Camera Obscura* 48, volume 16, number 3 (Duke University Press, 2001), 158-195. The vamp character does appear in *The Mating Call* in 1928. However, as I will discuss later, she is not the target of the Klan's attacks and is depicted as an American.

⁵¹ 'Shadows of the West Based on Big American Theme', *Daily Kennebec Journal* (18/4/22), 4.

⁵² 'Shadows of the West', *Moving Picture World* (27/11/20), 513.

⁵³ The quote from *The Record* appears in the *Daily Kennebec Journal* review (18/4/22), 4.

⁵⁴ The censor board in Ohio rejected the film on 29/12/20 'on account of being harmful.' The film was resubmitted on 4/4/22, but was again rejected. See Record 878, *Ohio Division of Film Censorship Records* held at Ohio Historical Society.

⁵⁵ *Exhibitors Trade Review* (27/11/20), 2733. The paper described the film in the most patriotic of terms as 'melodrama intended by real Americans to give an American warning to Americans'. This patriotic message presented a foreign enemy, with the review recognising that the film was 'distinctly a plea against the so-called yellow-peril.'

⁵⁶ Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (New York: MacMillan, 1987), 3-4.

⁵⁷ Charlene Regester, 'Black Films, White Censors', in *Movie Censorship and American Culture*, edited by Frances Couvares (Smithsonian, 1996), 171. Micheaux defined himself and his work in racial terms and thus his negative depiction of the Klan was largely racially divisive.

⁵⁸ Richard Alan Nelson speculated that *A Mormon Maid* (1917) may have been distributed on a states rights basis by Freidman enterprises, rather than as a Paramount release, 'Perhaps because of its controversial nature and to avoid potential Latter-day Saints boycotts in Utah of other Paramount product.' Richard Alan Nelson, 'Commercial Propaganda in the Silent Film: A Case Study of *A Mormon Maid* (1917)', *Film History, Volume 1* (1987), 157.

⁵⁹ Contained within Hays' list of 'Don'ts and Be Carefuls', written in 1927, was a warning not to 'ridicule the clergy'. This reference would seem particularly significant given the strong protests the Klan launched against *The Pilgrim* in 1923. The list also urges producers to avoid any film that may cause 'willful offence to any nation and creed'. The protesting action of the N.A.A.C.P. (and Catholic groups) would appear to influence this warning.

⁶⁰ 'Exhibitors' Reports', *Moving Picture World* (15/3/-12/4/24). It was at the Auditorium Theatre in Chicago that the two projectionists showing *Birth* were arrested. Despite this *Variety* (21/2/24) reported that the film enjoyed a four week run and 'set a box office attendance record for the theatre.' This is also recounted in Fleener-Marzec (1980), 339.

⁶¹ The poster comes from *Heart O' The Hills* Publicity Book, accessed at the Moving Image Section, Library of Congress. In the film, Pickford wears white robes, but unfortunately the photocopies do not make this clear.

⁶² 'The Hill-Billy Review', *Moving Picture World* (22/3/24). The film was referred to as a 'study of certain types of people', representing 'Kentucky Mountain life'.

⁶³ *Moving Picture World* (19/8/22). The official synopsis for the film, registered on 22/6/22, refers to the 'quaint Alabama town.' Even in later films such as *Storm Warning* (1950) the southern settings are constantly emphasised in reviews. The exact locale is again vague with *Time* (5/3/51) suggesting that 'Shrewd producer Jerry Wald also manages to make the picture inoffensive, and even palatable, to most Southern moviegoers'. The figures do not speak in distinctly southern dialects and nothing in the appearance or customs of the town 'sets them apart from California or the middle west.' *New York Times* (5/3/51) similarly stated that this community is 'presumably in the South' but noted that along with palm trees there are also mountains. *Photoplay* (7/22), 103.

⁶⁴ *Kingston Daily Freeman* (28/5/20), 6. *Moving Picture World* (1/7/22), 58. *Big Stakes* (1922) was set on the Mexican border, while *The Fifth Horseman* (1924) was set in Texas. *Shadows of the West* was also described by the *Daily Kennebec Journal* (14/4/23) as a 'sensational picture of the Great Far West.'

⁶⁵ This film also presented itself as escapist, through its use of comedy and by presenting children as the main protagonists. Behrens estimated that there were 'about 20000 to 25000 men and women' in the Klan in Sayville at its peak. The article (www.newsday.com) shows the Klan established ostensibly as a law-enforcing group. The Klan here 'served as a counterweight to the dullness of life on rural Long Island.'

⁶⁶ 'Review by William McDonald of 'The Ku Klux Klan'', *The New York Times* (16/3/24).

⁶⁷ Jacqueline Najuma Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity* (University of California Press, 2005), 222-5.

⁶⁸ Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black* (1977), 61. The image of Mary Pickford controlled all readings of *Heart O' The Hills*, as the film was sold almost entirely on its star. Adverts in the *Washington Post* (7/12/19) said 'Rialto is honored to present as its star, Mary Pickford.' Pickford featured prominently throughout 1920, whether editing *Picturegoer* or appearing in a *Topical Budget* film, which advertised such clips as 'Mary buys a rose'. The success of a pig, named Mary Pickford in a local contest was deemed newsworthy. Pickford's image was equally important, and used extensively in promotion. The Stoll Picture House in Kingsway advertised for women who looked like Pickford 'to sell programmes' in the vestibule during the run of *Heart O' The Hills*. (*What's On In Southampton*, 23/10/20).

⁶⁹ The traditional southern values of revenge and honour, intrinsically linked to the Klan, are promoted in the film. Mavie takes particular offence when accused of lying in court, shouting 'D--n it! Didn't ye seed me kiss the book'. Her Grandfather adds that 'she may be a murderess, but she ain't no liar'. Other films that highlighted their distinct regional identity, such as *My Old Kentucky Home*, which was said to 'have beauty to make one proud of having been born in Old Kentucky' were hugely popular throughout the country. See *Moving Picture World* (8/7/22).

⁷⁰ 'Mary and Doug arrive in England', *Pictures and Picturegoer* (10/7/20), 35.

⁷¹ Leslie DeBauche, 'Mary Pickford's Public on the Home Front' from *Film and The First World War* (Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 150.

⁷² *ibid.*, 155

⁷³ *ibid.*, 153.

⁷⁴ *Pictures and Picturegoer* (10/7/20), 35. Magazines endorsed (and preserved) Pickford's reputation as the sexless big sister. A typical report in *Bioscope* (13/3/20) recounts a tale of Pickford politely telling off a little boy who called her 'Mary Pigfeet'. The boy apologised, and Pickford, not only wrote back to him, but also phoned his school to ensure that he was settling in well. She was told that he 'was now one of the best boys in school'. Pickford, in contrast to Gloria Swanson and the modern women, appeared as a positive moral force.

⁷⁵ 'In Kentucky Mountains: Book Review of HOTH', *The New York Times* (23/3/13), 155. *The New York Times* (1/12/19).

⁷⁶ Kevin Brownlow, *Mary Pickford Rediscovered* (Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 166

⁷⁷ *Variety* (5/12/19).

⁷⁸ This clear structure ensures that these films can be easily understood by youth audiences. A stage play entitled *The White Caps* by Owen Davis appeared around the same time as Porter's film. Dixon's play *The Clansman* also opened on Broadway in 1906. *The White Caps* play was advertised in *The Evening Times* in Cumberland, Maryland (21/9/1906) as 'The season's greatest sensation. Companion play to THE CLANSMAN.' A further report (20/9/06, p.3) explained that the play 'is derived from the same subject as *The Clansman*', but Davis' play promised to show the 'atrocious deeds' of *The White Caps*. *The White Caps* were not affiliated with the Klan, but in serving as a law enforcing group, particularly in border states, shared much in common with the Klan.

⁷⁹ *Portsmouth Daily Herald* (20/2/1906), 2.

⁸⁰ *Altoona Mirror*, Pennsylvania (17/9/1906), 1.

⁸¹ Lee Grieveson, *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early Twentieth Century America* (University of California Press, 2004), 42-44 and pp. 50-52.

⁸² Michelle Wallace and Charles Musser briefly discuss *The White Caps* on the DVD release of *Edison: The Invention of The Movies* (Kino Video, 2005).

⁸³ Albert B. Williams, 'The Fury of Patient Men', *The New York Times* (10/8/19), 3.x. The writer served up a nostalgic tribute to the initial Klan, describing it as 'a safeguard for civilisation' and suggesting that even the 'most patient and good natured of people' joined such groups.

⁸⁴ Daniel Bernardi, *The Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of U.S. Cinema* (Rutgers University Press, 1996), 7.

⁸⁵ The quotation comes from the official publicity material for *Heart O' The Hills*. 'Catch lines for lobby and Program Advertising' from *Heart O' The Hills* Publicity book, accessed at the Moving Image Section, Library of Congress.

⁸⁶ *The New York Times* (23/3/13), 155.

⁸⁷ Kathleen Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (University of California Press, 1991), 21.

⁸⁸ Nancy Maclean (1994, p.117) briefly outlines the uncomfortable relationship between the male and female sections of the Klan. She illustrates the control the male group attempted to exercise over the WKKK, yet it is important to recognise the popularity of the Klan amongst women. The best and most exhaustive account on the WKKK is Kathleen Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (University of California Press, 1991).

⁸⁹ Michael Rogin, from Robert Lang (ed.), *The Birth of a Nation* (Rutgers University Press, 1994), 193. Memorials to the Civil War emphasised these clear gender boundaries. A speaker at Memorial Day in Iowa in 1892 said that Confederate soldiers showed that 'true manliness may yet be found.' Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1993), 171.

⁹⁰ Kevin Brownlow, *Mary Pickford Rediscovered* (Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 168.

⁹¹ 'Memorandum of Agreement between John Fox, Jr. and Gladys Mary Moore (Mary Pickford)' (16/6/19), from the Collections of the Margaret Herrick Library at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills, California.

⁹² The Los Angeles Papers were quoted in the April 1 edition of *Kinematograph Weekly*, as saying, 'Mary Pickford says she will devote her life to the screen and will never marry again', yet Pickford had actually remarried three days earlier. Pickford admits in her autobiography, *Sunshine and Shadow* that 'we were warned that our pictures might become total failures at the box office, that our hard-earned prestige would be buried under an avalanche of malignant gossip and denunciation'. See Mary Pickford, *Sunshine and Shadow* (Doubleday, 1955), 204.

⁹³ Gary Carey, *Doug and Mary* (E. P. Dutton, 1977), 107. Carey added that 'the Fans didn't want to see Mary's virtue compromised - they wanted her intact, wholesome, ignorant of the facts of life.'

⁹⁴ Robert Windeler, *Sweetheart: The Story of Mary Pickford* (W. H. Allen, 1973), 110.

⁹⁵ There was further speculation at this time that Pickford was pregnant, while *Picturegoer* (29/5/20, p.560) reported that Pickford 'has been suffering from a nervous breakdown'. Yet for a publication that devoted itself almost entirely to Pickford, there was only a tiny note on this illness. Pickford's value as an American symbol was such that the press did not want to focus on any indiscretion. *Photoplay* even ran an editorial urging Pickford and her new husband to come home to America, under the banner 'ALL IS FORGIVEN'. This story is retold in Scott Eyman, *Mary Pickford: America's Sweetheart* (Dutton Adult, 1990), 128.

⁹⁶ *Variety* (5/12/19).

⁹⁷ Pickford is a barrel of contradictions throughout the film. She is innocent, yet violent. She is pure, yet evidently sexualised. She attempts to maintain the existing social order, yet her liberating female character threatens this order. She seeks to protect womanhood, yet must undertake a distinctly masculine role to do this.

⁹⁸ *New York Tribune* (11/3/24). The review appeared under the heading 'worthy picture starring Jack Pickford arrives quietly'. The film was sandwiched between vaudeville acts at the small Broadway theatre. The reviewer complained that there is 'no excuse for the timid manner in which its owners have presented it to the public'.

⁹⁹ 'Exhibitors' Reports', *Moving Picture World* (4/6/24). An exhibitor in Connecticut credited the poor attendance of *The Hill-Billy* to the fact that it was 'not a women's picture, and the women are the backbone of our audience'. See 'Exhibitors' Reports', *Moving Picture World* (4/5/24).

¹⁰⁰ 'Critics laud 'Hill-Billy' at Opening in New York', *The New York Times* (29/3/24). Reviews barely mentioned the night riding scenes, which were less prominent than in *Heart O' The Hills*.

¹⁰¹ The AFI Catalogue describes the group as 'an angry mob of hillsmen'.

¹⁰² John Fox Jr., *The Heart Of The Hills* (New York: Schribner's, 1913), 106, 108, 118, 51, 119.

¹⁰³ 'The Heart O' The Hills, A Rough Picture Version by Bernard McConville', 6. The script is housed at the Margaret Herrick Library at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills, California.

¹⁰⁴ *Washington Post* (8/13/19).

¹⁰⁵ Leatrice Gilbert Fountain, *Dark Star* (St Martins Press, 1985), 44.

¹⁰⁶ Linda Williams, *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O.J. Simpson* (Princeton University Press, 2001), 43.

¹⁰⁷ *The Times* described the night riders as 'victims who seek revenge by night-riding and murder', but it would appear that by joining such a violent group, Pickford ceases to be a victim and loses her innocence. *The Times* (29/3/20), 12a.

¹⁰⁸ 'Catch Lines for Lobby and Program Advertising' from *Heart O' The Hills Publicity Book*, accessed at the Moving Image Section, Library of Congress. Eileen Whitfield, *Pickford: The Woman Who Made Hollywood* (University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 195.

¹⁰⁹ Eileen Whitfield, *Pickford: The Woman Who Made Hollywood* (University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 338. The fact that Pickford is never shown killing anyone within the film is vital for her redemption.

¹¹⁰ *New York Herald* (19/6/22).

¹¹¹ In *The Virginian*, the lynching of the enemy by the hero is never shown, while the shoot out is only shown from long range. Retribution is presented as a necessity, but the film emphasises the action, not the violence and killing.

¹¹² John Moffatt Mecklin, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1924), 25-29. See also David Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (Third Edition, New York, 1981), 36-38.

¹¹³ *Big Stakes* is different from the Tom Mix film *For Big Stakes*, also released in 1922.

¹¹⁴ The role of Garnett is played by Henry Walthall. Walthall, who had led the charge of the Klan as the little Colonel in *The Birth of a Nation*, now finds himself as the object of the charge

of the Klan. Walthall had also appeared as a Catholic Priest in *The Confession*, a pro-Catholic film in 1919, as he moves from Klan leader, to Catholic Priest and finally to victim of the Klan. Despite his shifting role, the presentation of the Klan was still largely positive in 1922, even though Walthall's presence meant a greater emphasis was placed on the 'victim' and wrongdoer than on the Klan.

¹¹⁵ A four page serialisation of the film, fictionalised by Jerome Shorey appeared in *Photoplay* in 1922. In this the Klan are ultimately presented as an important law enforcing group, with the writer commenting that 'the garish lights of the Owl were an eyesore to all decent citizens, and at last the mysterious organisation, the Clan, which flourishes here and there in the South, decided to take action.' (p.103). The criticisms of the Klan's secret methods within the film can largely be attributed, as I will show, to the suggested changes made by The Motion Picture Commission in New York.

¹¹⁶ *Chicago Tribune* (17/6/22).

¹¹⁷ Pearl Bowser and Louise Spence, *Writing Himself into History: Oscar Micheaux, His Silent Films and His Audiences* (Rutgers University Press, 2000), 159. *Movies and American Society* (2002) edited by Steven Ross also includes this quote, which comes from a review from *Symbol of the Unconquered* in *Competitor* 3 (Jan-Feb 1921).

¹¹⁸ John Moffatt Mecklin, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind* (New York, 1924), 12. Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 316.

¹¹⁹ 'Let the Klan Die', *The New York Times* (20/11/23).

¹²⁰ 'Review by William McDonald of "The Ku Klux Klan"', *The New York Times* (16/3/24). The Klan presented by Simmons was a single idealised entity, yet newspaper reports were exposing the Klan as a broad, disparate group, which owing primarily to its secrecy was often a law unto itself. Simmons' model was presented as a positive organisation, promoting 100% Americanism, rather than as a negative group, targeting immigrants.

¹²¹ John Moffatt Mecklin, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind* (1924), 25-29. On the day of *One Clear Call*'s release, a review for a book entitled 'Aspects of Americanisation' appeared within *The New York Herald*. The reviewer remarked that 'there has been, and is, a vast deal of nonsense talked about "Americanisation" and that much of it is, not merely stupid, but actively vicious'. *New York Herald* (18/6/22), 8:7.

¹²² *Moving Picture World* (1/7/22), 58.

¹²³ *Moving Picture World* (5/4/19).

¹²⁴ In the next chapter I will show how the Klan's own films addressed the misrepresentation of the Klan by immoral businessmen.

¹²⁵ John Moffatt Mecklin, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind* (1924), 35.

¹²⁶ 'None but Native Villains', *The New York Times* (2/8/23). The editorial acknowledged the power of film, as films are seen by 'many people who hardly ever read. They get their idea of foreigners from what they see on the films'. The industry was now aware of the dangers of displaying foreign enemies, with the piece recognising that such stereotypes contributed to 'the present needlessly large amount of international ill-feeling'.

¹²⁷ Lee Grieveson, *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early Twentieth Century America* (University of California Press, 2004), 81.

¹²⁸ *Variety* (23/6/22).

¹²⁹ 'The Fifth Horseman script' accessed at the Moving Image Section, Library of Congress. *The Port Arthur News* succinctly explained that the Klan's role was to convince the central character that 'smuggling booze into the land is wrong.' 'Fifth Horseman Draws Crowds', *The Port Arthur News* (19/11/24), 2.

¹³⁰ *The Toll of Justice* (1923) introduces the villain in the opening scene by positioning him in a seedy drinking den. The characters are defined by their surroundings, with one of the villains lying on the floor begging for more drugs and drink; 'You made me spill all I had, please give me more, I must have it, I must, I MUST!!' Haskell, the central villain, who ultimately kidnaps

the female heroine, is always viewed in relation to drink. When he says 'I want to think' he immediately pours himself another drink. After the kidnapped female is brought back to the drinking den, she is threatened by a lecherous drinker.

¹³¹ Alan Gevinson (ed.), *American Film Institute Catalogue. Within Our Gates: Ethnicity in American Feature Films, 1911-1960* (University of California Press, 1997), 236. *Moving Picture World* (1/7/22), 58.

¹³² David A. Horowitz, *Inside The Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 149.

¹³³ Frederick James Smith, 'Foolish Censors', *Photoplay* (10/22), 39-41.

¹³⁴ *Report of The Motion Picture Commission of the State of New York* (6/1922), Serial Number 2936. File accessed from the New York State archives. The Commission also appeared to view the Klan as 'mob violence' and criticised the Klan's secret methods. While this may complicate the presentation of the Klan as moral purveyors, criticisms on film of the Klan's secret methods usually highlighted the possibility of corrupt individuals imitating the Klan for their own violent purposes. Any violent and disreputable activities could therefore be attributed to individuals misusing the Klan costume.

¹³⁵ 'Mr Ford and the Eighteenth Amendment', *Kourier* (10/25), 10.

¹³⁶ *Moving Picture World* (22/3/24).

¹³⁷ I have discussed *The Fifth Horseman* within this chapter as it was largely presented within mainstream exhibition contexts and it followed closely on from *One Clear Call*. The film was produced by a New York company, but there is no evidence that this was a Klan controlled company like those of Miafa or Cavalier that I will discuss in the next chapter. The film featured an early appearance by Una Merkel in the female lead.

¹³⁸ The script states that St. John 'looks, shakes his head, slowly, sorrowfully, as if what he sees is depressing.'

¹³⁹ *Iowa City Press-Citizen* (2/9/25), 5. Despite the apparent reluctance to discuss the film in religious terms, the advert concluded by urging readers to 'Come, enjoy a good clean moving picture in the great outdoors under God's canopy.'

¹⁴⁰ 'Righteousness Theme of Play: 'Fifth Horseman' is Romance with Moral', *The Port Arthur News* (16/11/24), 5. The contemporary nature of the tale is noted in adverts, with one in *Daily Kennebec Journal* (6/4/25) writing that "'The Fifth Horseman" is a picture of what is going on in the world today.'

¹⁴¹ *Decatur Review* (10/12/24).

¹⁴² *Kansas City Star* (9/4/26), 26.

¹⁴³ *Moving Picture World* (30/9/22).

¹⁴⁴ *Coshocton Tribune* (24/12/22), 12.

¹⁴⁵ *Syracuse Herald* (4/6/22), 11. *Sheboygan Press-Telegram* (22/4/22), 10.

¹⁴⁶ *Oakland Tribune* (3/7/19, p.12, 7/7/19, p.5).

¹⁴⁷ *Kingston Daily Freeman* (28/5/20), 7. *The Pointer* (8/8/19) in Riverdale, Illinois, wrote that 'Miss Joyce has a most unusual and appealing role as the heroine in a swift moving story of the white rider days', again emphasising the excitement of positioning her character with the night riders without reference to the film's attitude towards the subject.

¹⁴⁸ *Moving Picture World* (4/10/13), 50. The review explained that the three reel picture was produced by Sidney Olcott, and written by Alf Hollingsworth. Jack Clark played a member of the Klan who falls in love with Gene Gauntier's character and is consequently persecuted by his former friends.

¹⁴⁹ *Coshocton Tribune* (25/4/20), 10. The advert contained the tagline 'Exposed! The secrets and terrible tragedies of Mormonism.' Although the film was released in 1917, reports suggested (not entirely accurately) that *A Mormon Maid* did not appear 'west of New York' until 1920. Certainly the film appeared predominantly throughout the country in 1920.

¹⁵⁰ Richard Alan Nelson, 'Commercial Propaganda in the Silent Film: A Case Study of A Mormon Maid (1917)', *Film History, Volume 1* (1987), 154.

¹⁵¹ *Kansas City Star* (16/1/21), 14C.

¹⁵² *Greenville Morning Herald* (9/2/18), 5. *Oakland Tribune* (13/3/18), 11.

¹⁵³ *Wid's* (22/2/17). The review is also referenced in Richard Alan Nelson, 'Commercial Propaganda in the Silent Film', *Film History, Volume 1* (1987), 161.

¹⁵⁴ *Variety* (16/2/17), 23.

¹⁵⁵ *Chronicle Telegram* (25/2/20), 5.

¹⁵⁶ As in the later westerns, John Hogue has once more exploited the anonymity offered by the Klan costume, misusing the costume for an ulterior motive. Although in this case, this ulterior motive (to save his daughter) is one that the audience is encouraged to identify with.

¹⁵⁷ *Sandusky Star Journal* (23/1/20), 10. See also *Gettysburg Times* (4/5/21), 6.

¹⁵⁸ *New York Tribune* (19/6/22), 6. The far from complimentary review concluded that the film 'ought to be extremely entertaining to all people who enjoy pictures because they move'.

¹⁵⁹ *The New York Times* (19/6/22).

¹⁶⁰ *Chicago Tribune* (16/5/22).

¹⁶¹ *Variety* (23/6/22). A favourite review of *One Clear Call* comes from an exhibitor, quoted in *MPW*. He described it in five words as 'slow, draggy, depressive. Otherwise Good.'

¹⁶² *The Lincoln State Journal* (1/10/22), 13 (section B).

¹⁶³ 'Ku Klux Klansmen Provide Screen Thrills', *Mexia Evening News* (10/8/22), 2.

¹⁶⁴ *Moving Picture World* (15/3/24).

¹⁶⁵ *Moving Picture World* (12/4/24), 525. *Daily Northwestern* (9/9/22), 6.

¹⁶⁶ *Pictures and Picturegoer* (16/10/20), 432.

¹⁶⁷ *Motion Picture News* (24/6/22), 3308. *Moving Picture World* (10/6/22), 579.

¹⁶⁸ *Chicago Tribune* (16/5/22). The Klan sequence was often overlooked in the reviews of these films, yet this does not necessarily reveal a sensitivity regarding the group, but rather illustrates that the Klan was only a small feature within these all-encompassing films. *The New York Herald* did headline a review with 'Ku Klux featured in *One Clear Call*', yet the mainstream American press often preferred to emphasise the emotional appeal and human interest within these pictures. *The Boston Advertiser* wrote, of *One Clear Call*, 'you will be deeply moved by it'. *Cleveland Press* called the film 'emotionally stirring', while *L.A. Herald* acclaimed the 'delightful vein of human interest.'

¹⁶⁹ *Moving Picture World* (5/4/19), 126.

¹⁷⁰ 'The Screen', *The Indianapolis Star* (15/5/22), 3. A Clan had featured in the 1911 novel, although after *Birth* and after 1920, any depiction of night-riders was now associated with the KKK. In the novel, the Clan was again a tool for the central villain, John Murrell. The Clan is described as a group 'which had terrorized half a dozen states, which had robbed and murdered with apparent impunity, which had marketed its hundreds of stolen slaves.'

¹⁷¹ *The Chronicle-Telegram* (9/6/22), 4.

¹⁷² *Fort Wayne News Sentinel* (6/8/22), 10.

¹⁷³ 'One Clear Call' by Frances Nimmo Greene, fictionalised by Jerome Shorey, from *Photoplay* (7/22), 77-8, 103-4.

¹⁷⁴ Earl Wayland Bowman, 'High Stakes', from *American Magazine* (9/20), 56-59 and 194-202. The story was accessed from Boise State University library.

¹⁷⁵ 'Letter from Earl Wayland Bowman to Agnes Just Reid' (26/2/22) and 'Letter from Earl Wayland Bowman to Agnes Just Reid' (16/4/22). The lengthy quote comes from a letter from Bowman to Reid (30/5/21). All letters are collected at Boise State University in MSS4 Box 1, Folder 26. Bowman explained that the price paid for the rights to *High Stakes* 'was so darned little it was practically nothing but I let them have it anyhow to sort of break the ice maybe.' Within two months he was describing the film industry as 'the crookiest rottenest game I ever saw in my life. So I have just called my stories in and told them when they want to talk business say it with MONEY. Anyhow I won't be expecting anything from them and won't be disappointed.'

¹⁷⁶ D.W.Griffith, *The Man Who Invented Hollywood; The Autobiography of D. W. Griffith* (Touchstone Publishing, 1972), 88.

¹⁷⁷ Pearl Bowser and Louise Spence, *Writing Himself into History: Oscar Micheaux, His Silent Films and His Audiences* (Rutgers University Press, 2000), 156, 159. *Competitor* 3 (Jan-Feb 1921) said in its review of *Symbol of the Unconquered* that 'One of the most thrilling and realistic scenes is that of the Ku Klux Klanners, who ride forth "on the stroke of twelve" to pursue their orgy of destruction and terror.'

¹⁷⁸ The description of the 'western version' is from www.turnerclassicmovies.com, in its synopsis of the film. I will discuss later the Klan's positioning within the western setting.

¹⁷⁹ This was the third *Our Gang* film, and was released on November 26, 1922. It was therefore probably filmed during the late spring of 1922.

¹⁸⁰ 'Film Capital Production Notes', *Camera* (5/11/21).

¹⁸¹ In *Law and Order*, the burglars 'organize a Klan for their own protection'. The burglars steal cars, paint them in their garage and then sell them back to their original owners. The Klan control the legal system as 'the jury usually consists of twelve good and faithful "Ku Klux"'. Foremost citizens join the Klan and "the poolrooms are deserted.'" The Copyright material 17084 (12/10/21), accessed at the Moving Image Section, Library of Congress.

¹⁸² 'Showman Enthusiastic Over "Big Stakes" Exploitation Angles', *Moving Picture World* (17/6/22), 626. The film opened with men on horseback trying to catch a buffalo. An advert for the film in *Middletown Daily Herald* (26/6/23, p.8), described the film as an 'unusual Western Comedy Drama'. *Shadows of the West* was described in *Daily Kennebec Journal* (18/4/22) as a 'western picture of the finest type'. *Frederick Daily News* (25/10/23), 12.

¹⁸³ Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture* (University of California Press, 1990), 28.

¹⁸⁴ As I have suggested, *Heart O' The Hills* and *The Cambric Mask* both offer accessible images of the Klan aimed at female and youth audiences.

¹⁸⁵ Producer Bill Steiner argued in 1924 that 'Few people, even those some time in the industry appreciate that westerns may be graded the same as society dramas and comedies.' According to *MPW* (10/5/24, p.167), Steiner sought to update the western genre and improve its perception by emphasising 'even greater human interest' and putting 'far more stress on romanticism, which has more or less strummed second fiddle in that field of male dominance.' Kevin Brownlow argued that before *The Covered Wagon* (1923), westerns held no prestige, with the film's director, James Cruze hating the idea of being 'demoted to the level of westerns'. Many films featuring night riders, such as *Heart O' The Hills* and *The Cambric Mask*, with strong western elements, were not promoted as westerns. It rather seems that the western framework offered an acceptable, socially removed world in which the Klan could feature. See Kevin Brownlow, *The War, The West and The Wilderness* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1979), 381.

¹⁸⁶ Virginia Wright Wexman, 'The Family on the Land' from *The Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of U.S. Cinema*, ed. Daniel Bernardi (Rutgers U.P., 1996), 129.

¹⁸⁷ Roberta Pearson suggests that a western hero, such as Custer, was a product of an era of 'debates over immigration quotas, panic over white slavery, the rebirth of the KKK, and other indices of a generalised xenophobia.' Custer's acceptance as an all-American racially pure hero was embraced, with no sympathy afforded to his Indian foes. The western and the Klan are products of this period, so that the western expresses attitudes associated with the Klan, even when it does not show the Klan on film. See Roberta E. Pearson, "The Revenge of Rain-in-the-Face"? or, Custers and Indians on the Silent Screen," in Daniel Bernardi, ed., *The Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of United States Cinema* (1996).

¹⁸⁸ Virginia Wright Wexman, 'The Family on the Land' from *The Birth of Whiteness* (1996), 143. *Variety* (12/3/23) described *The Covered Wagon* as the 'biggest thing the screen has had since Griffith made *The Birth of a Nation*.' *The New York Times* review (23/3/23) concluded that *The Covered Wagon* 'is American and it carries any measure of thrills'.

¹⁸⁹ 'Griffith's "Birth of a Nation" Remains "The Daddy of 'em All"', *Variety* (8/12/22).

¹⁹⁰ *Heart O' The Hills* highlights the importance of the family home as a source of stability and as a representation of childhood innocence. The northern outsider takes not only the family land and house, but also the 'family home' as he moves in and marries Mavie's mother. The Klansman's manual explained that the 'American home is fundamental to all that is best in life, in society, in church and in the nation'. The group within *The Mating Call* also states that 'It is the duty of this organisation to protect the honor of our homes', as the Klan and western heroes fight not simply for land, but for all that the land (and the home) represents. The quote comes from Kathleen Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (University of California Press, 1991), 46.

¹⁹¹ See Evelyn Ehrlich, 'The Civil War in Early Film: Origin and Development of a Genre', *Southern Quarterly* 19 (Spring Summer 1981), 70-82.

¹⁹² Bruce Chadwick argued that during the 1950s the Civil War movie moved west, as existing Civil War characters transferred into a fresh western setting. I would argue that this move happened directly after *The Birth of a Nation*, but rather than Civil War veterans transferring across genres, it was the values of the Civil War that appeared in westerns. See Bruce Chadwick, *The Reel Civil War: Mythmaking in American Film* (New York, 2001).

¹⁹³ V. Wright Wexman, 'The Family on the Land' from *The Birth of Whiteness* (1996), 152.

¹⁹⁴ *Pictures and Picturegoer* (16/10/20).

¹⁹⁵ Peter Stanfield, *Horse Opera: The Strange History of the 1930s Singing Cowboy* (University of Illinois Press, 2002), 143.

¹⁹⁶ William K. Everson, *American Silent Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 240. Everson suggested that this was due to industrial pressures, but again the western would appear to endorse the values of the Klan, while presenting a framework in which the organisation could feature as a moral group. The director Bill Steiner announced in 1924 his decision to remove saloons from his westerns, deeming them no longer relevant during prohibition, yet this setting was vital in presentations of the Klan. The Klan closed down the illegal bar in *One Clear Call* and *The Fifth Horseman*, and operated as moral purveyors (or corruptors in *Big Stakes*) around the established image of the saloon. The saloon has an extended history as a centre for fist and gun fights on film, and this setting becomes even more reprehensible during prohibition, pervading a sense of excitement, corruption and illegality on film. See 'Prohibition Causes Big Bill Steiner to Eliminate Saloon from his Westerns', *Moving Picture World*, (10/5/24), 167.

¹⁹⁷ Joanna Hearne, "'The Cross- Heart People": Race and Inheritance in the Silent Western', *Journal of Popular Film and Television* (Winter 2003), 181-196.

¹⁹⁸ *Exhibitors' Trade Review* (26/3/21), 1559. *Sheboygan Press-Telegram* (22/4/22), 10.

¹⁹⁹ *Middletown Daily Herald* (26/6/23), 8.

²⁰⁰ *Moving Picture World* (24/3/23), 466.

²⁰¹ The night riders are not punished at the end of these films. For example in an earlier Franklyn Farnum film from 1919, *Breezy Bob*, Farnum opposed the leader of the local vigilante group, who was also a whiskey runner. At the end of the film, the villain, who had framed Bob's father for murder and kidnapped Bob's girl, is killed, but the rest of his group is largely unpunished.

²⁰² The western overcomes this obstacle by showing the athleticism of figures such as Tom Mix, illustrating their position at the top of the blood pyramid, while still showing his egalitarian values towards those presented as inferior to him. The display of Tom Mix's body emphasises his superiority, yet Mix still receives help from others, who he may treat as equals, even if the film, through its presentation of the hero, suggests that they are not on the same level as the male hero.

²⁰³ Joanna Hearne, "'The Cross - Heart People": Race and Inheritance in the Silent Western', *Journal of Popular Film and Television* (Winter 2003), 181-196.

²⁰⁴ A number of westerns address the issue of miscegenation, such as *The Last of the Mohicans* (1920) and *The Vanishing American* (1925).

²⁰⁵ 'Serial Signs', *Moving Picture World* (1/12/23), 486.

- ²⁰⁶ *The New York Times* (18/6/22).
- ²⁰⁷ *Moving Picture World* (4/6/22). There may have been a reluctance to mention the Klan directly in Boston, an area with a substantial Catholic population, but in popular Klan states, like Indiana and Ohio, the Klan elements were often prioritised.
- ²⁰⁸ *Moving Picture World* (17/6/22), 692.
- ²⁰⁹ *Kinematograph Weekly* (21/9/22), 66.
- ²¹⁰ *Moving Picture World* (31/3/23), 543.
- ²¹¹ *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (17/1/23), 4.
- ²¹² *The Gleaner* (8/3/23), 4.
- ²¹³ This exploitation was first reported as 'Local Ku Klux Klan exploits "One Clear Call"' in *Motion Picture News* (2/9/22), 1150. A picture of the Fair theatre appeared on 26/8/22, p.1114, and a week later (2/9/22), the same picture appeared, now claiming to be a display for 'Palace Theatre, Amarillo Texas.' The story was also reported as 'Lobby Front for "One Clear Call" plays up Highlights of Production', *Motion Picture News* (9/9/22), 1264.
- ²¹⁴ 'Advance Exploitation on "One Clear Call" Arouses City Officials', *Motion Picture News* (2/9/22), 1141.
- ²¹⁵ 'Street Stunts in City and Town', *Exhibitors Trade Review* (9/9/22). Vol. 12, No. 15, 984.
- ²¹⁶ 'Huge Cutout of Masked Rider Adorns Top of Theatre for "One Clear Call"', *Motion Picture News* (23/9/22), 1493.
- ²¹⁷ 'Employs Ku Klux Klan Stunt to Exploit "One Clear Call"', *Motion Picture News* (2/9/22), 1148.
- ²¹⁸ This advert appears in a number of local papers including *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (9/2/23), 8 and *Lincoln State Journal* (1/10/22), B-13.
- ²¹⁹ 'Fifth Horseman Draws Crowds: Author of Picture Native of Texas', *The Port Arthur News* (19/11/24), 2.
- ²²⁰ *Fiery Cross* (23/1/25, p. 7, 30/1/25, p.2). *Davenport Democrat and Leader* (14/9/25), 3.
- ²²¹ *Mexia Daily News* (16/11/24), 7.
- ²²² 'Birth of A Nation Good Fourth Time', *Moving Picture World* (7/4/23), 635.
- ²²³ 'Masked Riders Parade for "Smilin' Through"', *Motion Picture News* (9/9/22), 1265.
- ²²⁴ 'Serial Signs', *Moving Picture World* (1/12/23), 486.
- ²²⁵ 'K.K.K. Helped', *Moving Picture World* (14/4/23), 743.
- ²²⁶ 'Invited the Klan to Meet the Jews', *Moving Picture World* (3/11/23), 146.
- ²²⁷ 'A Plan Book Scheme Made Campaign', *Moving Picture World* (8/9/23), 150. For a later Keaton film, *MPW* (19/11/24, p.209) described the film's promotion under the heading 'Better than K.K.K.'. This publicity stunt was clearly used and recognised widely.
- ²²⁸ 'Uses K.K.K. Angle', *The Film Daily* (3/10/23). The stunt was also used in Ironwood, Michigan. *Ironwood Daily Globe* (11/4/24, 12) contained an advert stating 'The KKK is here. Keaton's Kolossal Komedy "Three Ages".'
- ²²⁹ 'The Mating Call Review', *Variety* (10/10/28).
- ²³⁰ Nancy MacLean, *Behind The Mask of Chivalry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 177.
- ²³¹ See Peter S. Harrison's *Harrison's Reports and Film Reviews, 1919-62* (Hollywood Film Archives, 1997).
- ²³² 'Box Office Record', *The Motion Picture Almanac* (Chicago, Quigley Publishing Company, 1929), 198. These comments concern a screening at The Texas Theatre, Grand Prairie from December 12-13.
- ²³³ *Variety* (10/10/28).
- ²³⁴ Memorandum (17/8/28) from State of New York Education Department, Motion Picture Division. Serial Number L38089.
- ²³⁵ *Warren Tribune* (2/1/28), 3.

²³⁶ *Variety* (10/10/28).

²³⁷ Rex Beach, *The Mating Call* (Hutchinson and Co, 1928), 90. The novel adds that 'Hatten discovered that the men wore hoods over their heads and robes reaching to their knees.'

²³⁸ Rex Beach, *The Mating Call* (Hutchinson and Co.: London, 1928), 49, 77, 195.

²³⁹ *The New York Times* (8/10/28), 14:2. In the novel Hatten is also attacked for his perceived adultery. He is labeled a 'sheik' and 'a menace to the morals of our younger set'.

²⁴⁰ In one scene she falls over helplessly and he carries her back to their house.

²⁴¹ In the novel there is a hint of Rose's foreign background as her maiden name is Burkhardt but in the film this is never mentioned or referred to.

²⁴² *Kansas City Star* (19/8/28), 10.

²⁴³ Rex Beach, *The Mating Call* (Hutchinson and Co.: London, 1928), 77, 90, 195, 82, 83.

²⁴⁴ *Variety* (10/10/28). The official publicity material for *The Mating Call* included a short piece headlined 'Another Meighan Story Mate for "the Racket".'

²⁴⁵ *Southtown Economist* (2/9/27), 6.

²⁴⁶ *The New York Times* (8/10/28), 14:2.

²⁴⁷ 'Exploitation Suggestions' and 'Catch -Lines!' from *The Mating Call Publicity Book*, accessed from the Moving Image Section, Library of Congress.

²⁴⁸ 'Terrorists Furnish Climax' from *The Mating Call Publicity Book*, accessed from the Moving Image Section, Library of Congress.

Chapter Four:

Klan Cinema: The Klan film experience

‘Klux closes deal for \$400,000 film to advertise Klan.’¹

In September 1921, *The New York World* uncovered plans for an ‘elaborate and costly’ Klan propaganda film, provisionally entitled *Yesterday, To-Day and Forever*. *The World*, in the midst of its lengthy exposé of the Klan, reported that the film was to be produced by Clifford Slater Wheeler, a Kleagle in New York and the self-appointed President of Wheeler Productions Inc. According to Wheeler, ‘the idea of the moving picture scheme met with the approval of [Imperial Kleagle] Clarke and Imperial Wizard Simmons.’ Clarke had discussed plans for the project as early as March 1921 with Arthur Donald Batè, a King Kleagle in New Jersey and a former vice-President of Wheeler’s production company. I highlighted in the opening chapter how Clarke encouraged Kleagles to use films like *The Face at your Window* for recruitment and propaganda, but *The New York World* described this new film as a piece of ‘up-to-date Ku Klux advertising,’ which positively addressed the modern Klan as a subject. Clarke evidently recognised the value of film for publicity and recruitment and within a year of joining (and effectively re-launching) the Klan, he was already looking to branch out into film production itself.

The report within *The World* came at a significant time for those allegedly involved in the film. Only a week earlier *The World* had reported that Edward Clarke and his fellow Kleagle Elizabeth Tyler had been arrested in 1919 drunk and half naked after a police raid on a house of ill repute. Their reputations within this traditional organisation, promoting domestic values and prohibition, were irreparably damaged and their very position within the Klan was under severe threat. One of the people that called for Clarke’s removal was Lloyd P. Hooper, who, according to *The World*, had originally received the contract from Clarke for the film. Hooper went to Atlanta in December 1921 and spoke out strongly against both Clarke and the Klan, for which he was fired from the group.² Clifford Wheeler had also left his position as the ‘King

Kleagle of the realm of Connecticut' shortly before *The New York World* story was published. According to *The Hartford Courant*, 'Wheeler's sudden departure is supposed to have resulted from a mix up in the box delivery at the local post office which resulted in the veil of secrecy of the Klan being torn violently asunder.' The report explained that Wheeler's Klan post had inadvertently been put in a neighbouring box.³ *The New Haven Register* wrote of the 'unfortunate publicity, in the eyes of organization,' that Wheeler received and explained that Simmons himself had ordered the removal of Wheeler as 'once the identity of a King Kleagle becomes known he must be shifted to other territory.'⁴ Wheeler eventually moved to Hollywood, where he produced a number of films, but not, it would appear, *Yesterday, To-Day and Forever*. Wheeler's standing within the Klan was evidently as unstable as Clarke's, and it is perhaps unsurprising that the film does not appear to have got beyond the initial planning stages.⁵

The apparent failure of this Klan film was not solely the responsibility of those people involved. As I illustrated in the previous chapter, films directly addressing the modern Klan were largely avoided by the industry during the 1920s on account of the censorship and controversy that they might generate. A Klan made film such as *Yesterday, To-Day and Forever* was potentially attempting to infiltrate the same market and thus needed to follow the existing industrial guidelines. An article in *Variety* written just a couple of weeks after *The World* had announced plans for a Klan production, illustrated the broad reluctance of exhibitors to deal with films that depicted the modern Klan. Under the headline 'No Great Demand for "Ku Klux" film,' *Variety* reported that 'a Ku Klux Klan States rights picture [was] now being made by Mark Dintenfass' but was 'meeting with opposing influence from many sources.' The film would appear in direct contrast to *Yesterday, To-Day and Forever* as it was to be a critical picture based on *The New York World* exposé, but reservations about the film appeared common to all films addressing the modern Klan.⁶ Dintenfass had sent a postcard to a thousand exhibitors and fifty exchanges 'asking the prospective chances for a peaceful presentation of the Ku Klux subject in their territory.' The replies contained a 'surprising number' of refusals, because the subject 'must necessarily excite censorship

opposition because of the public agitation it would arouse in the vicinities, with adherents of the Ku Klux on one side and the opposition on the other.’⁷ After *The Birth of a Nation*, exhibitors recognised the cinema space as a potential site of confrontation, and any film depicting the Klan, regardless of its ideological standpoint, was closely monitored by both censors and exhibitors.

An anti-Klan picture ‘that pans the entire Klan under the title of “The Hooded Mob”’ was completed at the beginning of 1922 and, while it is not clear whether this was Dintenfass’ project, the film appeared to confirm the concerns previously expressed by exhibitors. The Klan newspaper *Searchlight* reported that ‘no-one seems anxious to handle the picture,’ further explaining that ‘the consensus of those that have seen the picture is that it would be a clean-up in the popular priced houses, but that type of theatre seemingly doesn’t want to play the feature.’⁸ Once more the topicality of the Klan would appear to make the Klan a commercially appealing but controversial subject, which was largely avoided by exhibitors. Furthermore, with vertical integration and the alleged ‘Jewish movie trust’ that the Klan so often spoke out against, opportunities for independent films were reduced and producers and Klan groups often struggled to find exhibition spaces for specialist Klan films.⁹

These early failed attempts to independently produce and exhibit films addressing the modern Klan suggest the problems faced by all independent productions featuring the Klan throughout the 1920s. The Klan, as the film discourse in chapter two revealed, evidently recognised the propagandist power of film and sought to use film to boost its public image and to help with recruitment. The Klan used and embraced existing films such as *The Face at your Window* and *Birth*, but a consideration of the group’s own films further highlights how the group wished to present itself on a national level. In this chapter I will consider the production histories and representation within these films, assessing how the Klan presented itself on screen, and how local Klan groups used publicity around screenings to define itself within the local community. I will then consider the exhibition contexts of the Klan’s own films, at both theatrical and non-theatrical venues. I will consider how Klan groups used film along with stage plays within their established entertainment programs, at theatres and in

Klaverns, and I will look at some individual theatres, most notably in Indiana, that were sympathetic to the Klan. Throughout the chapter I will consider how successful the Klan was as an independent producer, and consider what the Klan's failings reveal more broadly about both the Klan and the film industry during the 1920s.

The Mysterious Eyes of the Ku Klux Klan

Despite the apparent failure of both Wheeler's Klan propaganda film and Dintenfass' largely anti-Klan film, the demand and potential for films depicting the Klan evidently increased as the public interest in the modern Klan intensified. As early as September 1921, the Marlowe Hippodrome in Illinois advertised "'The White Riders" and Ku Klux Klan pictures,' and during 1922 independent producers sought to exploit the topical and local interest in the Klan by producing footage of modern Klansmen in action.¹⁰ In April 1922, Bernard McComb, an operator for the Liberty Theatre in Oklahoma City, premièred his film, initially entitled *Mysterious Eyes of the Ku Klux Klan of Oklahoma*, which was completed after he spent three months filming the Oklahoma Klan No. 1. The film presented filmed footage of local Klansmen and, in contrast to those fictional narrative films produced by the industry, it positively emphasised the topical nature of the film and the local settings. A report in *Searchlight* for *The Mysterious Eyes of the Ku Klux Klan* appeared under the headline 'Movies to show acts of the Ku Klux Klan' and exhibitors and reporters highlighted that this film would at last reveal the 'true' actions of the modern Klan.¹¹

A 'Ku Klux Klan picture' had played at the local Broadway Theatre at the end of March and, although it is not entirely clear whether this was McComb's picture, adverts emphasised that the film was 'depicting the Klan's operations.'¹² At the end of May 1922, *The Mysterious Eyes of the Ku Klux Klan* appeared for two nights at the Majestic theatre in Wichita, Texas. It was billed as 'the most talked-of-picture ever made and the only picture ever made showing the workings of the K.K.K.'¹³ In August 1922, The Auditorium Theatre in Modesto, California offered the 'only genuine motion pictures' showing 'the Klansmen in full regalia.' The pictures were 'taken in Oklahoma

and Texas' and included a 'genuine midnight initiation scene.' A few days later, *The Inside Story of The Ku Klux Klan* played in Decatur, promising to show 'the actual inside workings from an unbiased standpoint.' *The Ku Klux Klan*, described as 'the only picture ever made positively showing the inner workings of the Ku Klux Klan,' played in Indianapolis in September, with a further report remarking that 'it is said to be an authentic film of the secret organisation.' *The Indianapolis Star* described it as 'a rambling account of what the Ku Klux Klan is supposed to do and many night pictures of Klan parades in Southern cities constitute the film program.'¹⁴ These films were in fact renamed versions of *The Mysterious Eyes of the Ku Klux Klan*, and the film appeared under all of these titles when it played for a week at the Lyric theatre in Fort Wayne in October 1922.¹⁵ Adverts again emphasised that the film offered the audience the chance to 'See who they [Klan] are, what they do, what they are and how they do' and was described as 'the talk of Fort Wayne.'¹⁶ When the film had appeared at the Strand in Port Arthur in August, it was again promoted as 'the most talked about picture ever made.'¹⁷ The words 'Ku Klux Klan' were emphasised in all adverts, as this topical subject aroused local interest, particularly in areas like Fort Wayne, which had a very strong Klan following. A further advert in Fort Wayne included a picture of a Klansman in full regalia outside the Lyric theatre with large crowds gathering around. The advert advised patrons to arrive early, warning that 'hundreds [have been] turned away.'¹⁸

The Mysterious Eyes of the Ku Klux Klan appeared in a number of states and, when it was released in Noblesville, Indiana in November 1922, it was still described as the 'only motion picture ever produced showing the workings of the Klan.' A further poster explained that the film was 'positively showing':

The Inner Workings of the Klan.

The Genuine Initiation Ceremonies.

The True Belief of the Klan.

The Uprising of the Klansman [sic.] in Oklahoma when they marched through the streets of Tulsa and Oklahoma City.¹⁹

Adverts emphasised that the producers had used genuine Klan footage, with a report on *The Mysterious Eyes of the Ku Klux Klan* commenting that one scene showed the Tulsa parade with 'more than 8,000 Klansmen in line of march with about 50,000 persons looking on.'²⁰ The film appeared to be adapted for each local community, and in Ohio the film was only shown after it had been completely reconstructed and cut from a three-reel to a two-reel film. The Ohio Board of Censorship had rejected the film in December 1922 'on account of [it] being harmful' and classed the film as 'propaganda.' However, two months later the board passed a barely recognisable version of the film, as episodes of Klan scenes faced heavy censorship if they wished to be exhibited in established theatres.²¹ When *The Mysterious Eyes of the Ku Klux Klan* showed in Lincoln, Nebraska in 1925, it was again reconstructed to emphasise its local connections. The film, now appearing as *The White Rider*, was described here as a 'mystery drama of the southwest, interwoven into one of the greatest sensational plays ever produced.' It was still advertised as the 'original and only genuine Klan moving picture ever produced,' but the poster now added that the film featured 'an exterior view of the Lincoln Klavern,' as the exhibitors sought to emphasise their local connections.²²

The example of *The Mysterious Eyes of the Ku Klux Klan* highlights the popular interest in the Klan, and a public desire to see behind the scenes of this mysterious organisation. It also reveals the censorship and potential controversy faced by independent films that featured the Klan. A film depicting a Ku Klux Klan ceremony held near Chicago in June 1922 was refused a permit by the local police head Charles Fitzmorris. According to *Searchlight*, Rev. Alonzo Bowling, 'a dark skinned Methodist preacher' was the only member of the board of censors to oppose the film. His concerns clearly responded directly to the furore that had surrounded screenings of *Birth* in Chicago earlier in the year, as he expressed concerns that the picture would 'excite his people.' *Searchlight* presented the banning of the film once more as religious persecution, complaining that 'the colored minister appealed to Chief of Police Fitzmorris, a Roman Catholic, and the Klan picture was barred.' The paper spoke disparagingly of the interference by the 'Roman chief.' The incident highlights not only the inherent controversy surrounding depictions of the Klan (particularly in areas where

screenings of *Birth* had been challenged), but also suggests once more a broader range of filmed pictures of local Klan groups during the early 1920s.²³

In September 1923 theatres in Shreveport Louisiana showed pictures of a recent downtown Klan parade. *The Fiery Cross* highlighted that the local theatres at which these films played 'are all owned and controlled by Jewish interests.' This hints at an inherent problem for producers in exhibiting Klan made films, but these pictures appeared to be local actualities. *The Fiery Cross* noted that the theatres 'were crowded with patrons eager to see the pictures of the Klan marchers,' suggesting once more the commercial interest in the Klan on screen by existing Klansman, and also by members of the public interested to know (and see) more about this exciting, mysterious, and visually powerful group.²⁴

In October 1923, The American Theatre in Noblesville Indiana, which, as I will discuss, was particularly sympathetic towards the Klan, showed 'Klan-O-Grams' for a couple of days, which were described as '1000ft of original scenes from activities of the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana.' The film promised to show 'night scenes of parades, naturalizations, demonstrations at Shelbyville, Rushville and Indiana State Fair.' These films, harking back to the appeal of early pre-industry films, offered the chance to 'see yourself as others see you.'²⁵ This film, like many others, enjoyed a very short lifespan and briefly exploited the topical, local interest in the modern Klan. However, during 1923 two far more significant films went into production, as established Klan groups sought to produce popular, widely accessible Klan narratives. Cavalier Moving Picture Company, a group established in 1923 and with strong Klan ties, produced the propaganda film *The Traitor Within*, while the Ohio Klan were involved in the production of *The Toll of Justice*, an ambitious film endeavouring to rival *The Birth of a Nation* and spread Klan propaganda throughout the country.

'The Ku Klux Klan makes a movie': Klan productions

In October 1923 *Movie Weekly* ran a three page article explaining that 'The Ku Klux Klan have made a movie that presents for the first time, as the K.K.K. sees it, the

truth about the Klan.' The article, written by T. Howard Kelly, who a few months earlier had speculated about the Klan's involvement in the death and retirement of a number of film stars, offered a series of vague, speculative phrases, but did reveal that a 'ten-reel picture had been made under the strict auspices of the Ku Klux Klan.' The article confirmed that news of the picture 'produced by the hooded organization' had come from an official announcement by the Klan, but suggested that 'the same veil of secrecy, which has hitherto surrounded the efforts of the Klan to carry out its hidden purposes has proved a curtain which camouflaged the production of the picture.'²⁶

Moving Picture World revealed further information, explaining that *The Toll of Justice*, as the film came to be called, was produced by the 'C. & S. Pictures Company of Columbus Ohio.' There is little else on this seemingly short lived company, although it was described elsewhere as the Stanley and Cook co. and appeared to be comprised of Corey G. Cook, the film's writer and director, and Earl Stanley, a local actor who appeared within the film.²⁷ Although C. & S. submitted the film to the Ohio censor board and was originally credited as the film's maker, the film, as the *Columbus Dispatch* recognised, was most significant as 'the first to be produced under the auspices of the Klan organization.' *Moving Picture World* explained that the film was made with the 'co-operation of the Columbus Klan, more than 1,000 members of that organization having volunteered to appear in full regalia in a number of scenes.'²⁸ Press reports emphasised its links with the Klan, with *The Chronicle Telegram* reporting that 'Director Cook is the first motion picture director who has worked a Klan meeting into a photoplay' and further explaining that the film used actual footage of the Konklave at Buckeye Lake. The Klan newspaper, *The Fiery Cross* explained that the film was 'designed to counteract the poisonous propaganda circulated by alien enemies who have declared their determination to wipe out the Klan' and the production of the film would appear to be a realisation of Clarke and Wheeler's ambitions from two years earlier.²⁹

However, the production of *The Toll of Justice* faced a series of problems. *Moving Picture World*, under the headline 'Klan film a fizzle,' reported in December 1923 that the Ohio Klan had 'encountered difficulties which spell failure for the proposition.' The article explained that in the final week of production, a reorganisation

was undertaken which saw the Klan become 'sole owner and producer,' with C. & S. Pictures Co. reduced to the capacity of an employee.³⁰ This reorganisation was significant, as initially producers had claimed that 'it is not strictly a Klan picture, and that it will be offered as a regular photoplay, and not as Klan propaganda.'³¹ When the film was finally released there was no mention of the company and instead it was a 'Miafa Pictures Company Inc.' production. 'Miafa' which stood for 'My Interests are for America' was a popular Klan slogan and the film was now widely promoted as a Klan-made picture. When the film made its première at the Rex Theatre in Newark in December 1923, the local press reported that 'the picture [was] directed by the Ku Klux Klan and taken by Klansmen.' A poster for this screening advertised the film as 'a Ku Klux Klan picture.'³²

The film, as a production from outside of the mainstream industry, struggled to achieve widespread distribution, and the lack of professional expertise within the company also undermined the film. *Moving Picture World* reported that when the film reached the laboratory 'it was found that something had gone wrong with the lighting system and the interiors would have to be retaken.' *The Ohio State Journal* observed that 'the technique of the production is rather crude as compared to the finished products of some of the more experienced producers,' with the paper seemingly highlighting a problem common to many independent filmmakers attempting to compete with established, expensive studio pictures.³³ Further problems arose for the film when the writer and director Corey Cook quite literally distanced himself from his work by moving to Egypt, while the general manager of the company was also reported to be leaving for California. *The Fiery Cross* and other Klan reports and adverts attempted to refute these claims. Yet the facts remain that the film, which was intended to be released in twenty-one states in September 1923, ultimately arrived three months later with a handful of screenings in local halls, school auditoriums and Klan supported theatres predominantly in Indiana and Ohio.³⁴

While the Klan in Ohio was struggling to complete the production of *The Toll of Justice*, Cavalier Moving Picture Company was attempting to produce its own Klan picture, *The Traitor Within*. Cavalier was incorporated in Delaware in March 1923 and

was immediately reported in *The New York World* as a company with strong Klan links. The paper wrote, under the headline 'Friends of Klan aspire to the screen,' that the President of the company was Dr C. Lewis Fowler.³⁵ Charles Lewis Fowler was a Klokard (a paid lecturer of the Klan), a writer of Klan literature, and the founder and President of Lanier University, the first university owned and controlled by the Klan. The university was declared bankrupt in the summer of 1922 and, despite having no discernable experience within film, Fowler soon assumed the role of President of Cavalier. Thomas Dyer recognised that after the closure of Lanier University, Fowler became 'one of the most widely travelled and best known Klan organizers' and the other leading figures within the organisation were also largely lecturers and organisers involved in Klan promotion and recruitment.³⁶

The Vice President of the company was the Kleagle of Buffalo, Major J. E. D. Smith, while the treasurer was the Reverend Oscar Haywood, who delivered a series of pro-Klan lectures in New York on the week of *Birth's* re-release in the city a few months earlier and evidently recognised the potential of film as a recruiting tool for the Klan. Haywood was an extremely prominent Klan lecturer and, when he gave a series of talks touching on the aims for the Cavalier Motion Picture Company during the summer of 1923, he was often introduced as the 'head' of the company. Haywood spoke at the meeting of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan at Mooresville in July 1923, which was attended by an estimated 50,000 people. He spoke there again a month later and Kathleen Blee suggested that the women's Klan was active in supporting the development of this 'clean' motion picture company.³⁷ During August 1923, Rev. Haywood also gave a talk at Foster Park in Kokomo, Indiana. *The Kokomo Daily Dispatch* reported that Haywood devoted the 'principal part of his address' to the motion picture industry.³⁸

Rev. Haywood's address broadly outlined the Klan's attitude towards film, and justified its own use of film by making a distinct qualification between film as a medium and the film industry. He explained, perhaps wary of Cavalier's own need to work with established exhibitors, that 'he did not urge Klansmen to stay away from the motion picture houses, nor did he wish to be understood as expressly criticising any

local theatre manager.' His problem, he explained was rather with 'the motion pictures as an industry,' which he said was '90 per cent owned by Jews.' In a subsequent talk, Haywood made the same complaint about the press, claiming that 'ninety percent of the newspaper proprietors of the country' were Jews.³⁹ These criticisms, clearly outlined in Klan literature, enabled the Klan to justify its own use of film, with Cavalier constantly distinguishing itself from the Jewish film industry by defining itself as a Protestant organisation.

The secretary of Cavalier was Roscoe Carpenter, another lecturer for the Klan in Indiana, who also lectured during the summer of 1923 on the function of the newly established film company. *The Fiery Cross* paraphrased Carpenter when explaining that Cavalier had recently been organised 'to release pictures of a real American nature to counteract some of the anti-Klan pictures that are now being made and exhibited by the opposition.' Once more Cavalier (and the Klan) presented itself in direct opposition to the established film industry, with a further report explaining that Cavalier would produce pictures 'which would counteract the influence of certain productions which had been found objectionable to the Klan.'⁴⁰ Cavalier was established at exactly the time that the Klan launched its protests against *The Pilgrim* and *Bella Donna*, and the emergence of these two Klan film companies appears as the Klan becomes more aware not only of the powerful influence of film, but also more specifically of the perceived threat that film presents to the patriotic, religious and racial values of the Klan. The establishment of Cavalier and Miafa thus appear as a further protest against the film industry and as a direct response to the perceived problems discussed in chapter two.

Film Daily briefly reported the establishment of Cavalier under the heading 'Ku Klux in films' and once more the press presented this company as a Klan enterprise designed to promote and extend the message of the modern Klan. Cavalier originally played down its links with the Klan, with Roscoe Carpenter claiming that he was 'not identified with the Klan and more than a year ago began promotion of the production of films glorifying Americanism.' Carpenter further claimed that 'the pictures we propose to produce will be on Americanism and not touch the Ku Klux Klan at all.'⁴¹ Oscar Haywood initially approached Thomas Dixon to write a scenario for the company, but

Dixon, who had recently been challenged to a debate by Haywood after criticising the modern Klan in February 1923, turned him down. The group instead announced that the title writer, Joseph W. Farnham would direct its films but Farnham described the situation as ‘entirely tentative and very hazy,’ and it was Haywood who assumed the role of writer for the company’s first intended picture. The first production was supposed to be “A Portrayal of the Life of Abraham Lincoln”, which was described as a pictorialisation of Lincoln’s assassination.⁴² Even as late as August 1923 Haywood was discussing this film at Klan gatherings, and yet when Cavalier came to launch their first film in Indiana at the start of 1924, it was a Klan propaganda film entitled *The Traitor Within*.

Controlling the image: Representing the Klan on screen

The Klan was an innately mysterious and secret organisation. It is therefore often difficult to decipher ‘truths’ behind the Klan, and the group itself was constantly challenging what it perceived as misrepresentations within the ‘foreign’ media. Klan speeches and newspapers help to uncover how the Klan perceived itself, but these Klan made films, most notably *The Toll of Justice* and *The Traitor Within*, and indeed the advertisements used to promote them, are invaluable to historians in suggesting how the Klan wished to present itself on a national level to Klansmen and non-Klansmen alike.

An advertisement for *The Traitor Within* in the *Anderson Daily Bulletin* explained that “‘The Traitor Within’ bares to everyone the ruse of a great false impression. Full of truth, it strives to promote a great thought – that of good will and common understanding among men.’ Further adverts emphasised that the film offered ‘The True Story of the Ku Klux Klan,’ while *The Fiery Cross* reported that *The Toll of Justice* was ‘designed to acquaint the uninformed public with the true principles of the organisation.’⁴³

Both *The Toll of Justice* and *The Traitor Within* sought to redefine the Klan, by directly confronting popular misrepresentations of the group. In *The Toll of Justice*, the central villain, Haskell, concocts a plan to frame the Klan for a murder that he has

committed. Haskell, whose drinking den and 'underworld' activities are heavily opposed by the Klan, forces two of his desperate customers to get him two Klan costumes in exchange for drink and drugs. In a series of flashbacks, the audience discovers that Haskell, with his weak-willed and desperate accomplice Saunders, dressed up in the Klan costume and carried out the killing. Haskell shifts the blame onto the 'real' Klansmen, telling the policeman 'I saw Tom Grant leave the Dale home on the night of the murder and hide this [Klan costume] in a bush.' Haskell then points to the badge on the costume.⁴⁴

Haskell wants to undermine the group and exploits the secrecy that surrounds it. In one scene Haskell, in costume, scares a black character and then laughs. The film presents this as a misuse of the Klan costume, and responds not only to the apparent false representation of the group within society (by threatened villains like Haskell), but also to the misrepresentation of the group by the media and on film. The film illustrates the need for the Klan to control its own representation, and shows the dangers of allowing opponents or outsiders to represent the group. The insistence, particularly in publicity materials, on unveiling the truth behind the Klan works closely with the narratives of these Klan films. The films suggest that the group is constantly misrepresented and so it is essential for the Klan to unveil the truth behind the organisation.⁴⁵

The Traitor Within addressed a remarkably similar theme, with an advert explaining that the film shows 'how crooks disguise themselves as Klansmen and commit robberies and murder.' A further report explained that the film reveals 'the methods of Klan enemies in their unscrupulous attacks on Klansmen and Klan principles.'⁴⁶ Both of these Klan films appeared to directly respond to the negative criticism of the group, defensively explaining its poor reputation, rather than positively promoting the value of the Klan. Both films illustrate the inherent problems that the Klan faced as a secret organisation, with *Movie Weekly* suggesting that the production of *The Toll of Justice* 'is a gesture on the part of the Klan to tear away the mask under which it has been existing, and which it would appear has been the cause of much antagonism to the organization.'⁴⁷ This theme is also addressed in Klan stage plays. For

example in *The Invisible Empire*, which played in Chicago at the beginning of 1923, 'night riders, using the Klan as an unwilling shield, go about committing misdemeanors.' A further review in Chicago added that the play 'voices the chronic alibi that the limbs of Satan, whose organisation is more secret and pervasive than that of the Klan are stealing the Kluck stuff.' Once more, the play defends the widespread criticisms of Klan violence, by suggesting that it is the Klan's enemies, adopting the Klan costume, that are deliberately undermining the group.⁴⁸ The play does differ from the films though, by presenting a racial enemy, who, according to the *Chicago Evening Post*, is depicted as a 'yellow devil of a Jap but also a foul field of a Russian.' The Klan, in newspapers and propaganda material, regularly underplayed its racist values, and certainly with the heavy censorship for example of *Shadows of the West*, which depicted a Japanese enemy, the Klan avoided presenting racial enemies on screen.⁴⁹

In an early review of *The Toll of Justice* in December 1923, *The Ohio State Journal* admitted that 'the Klan does not take as important a part in the scenario as one might be led to expect.' C. & S. explained this by stating that 'this picture and those which will follow it are primarily for amusement and are not propaganda.'⁵⁰ The Ohio Board of Censors evidently agreed, as it classed the film as a drama and passed it in November 1923 with no eliminations. The film presented patriotic American values that were not exclusive to the Klan, opening with a one-reel prologue illustrating the history of the American flag or, to use *The Fiery Cross*' terms, 'a lesson in flag etiquette.'⁵¹ The film initially sought to position itself within the mainstream market, appealing not exclusively to Klansmen but to the 'uninformed public.' In narrative and thematic structure the film also borrowed heavily from the popular women's serials and appears remarkably similar to *Heart O' The Hills*, released by First National four years earlier.

The Traitor Within was perhaps more blatant in its propaganda, and it directly presented the Klan, which was an increasingly powerful force politically within Indiana, within 'an American city on the verge of a mayoralty election.'⁵² The Ohio Board of Censors rejected the film outright in April 1924, but the promotion and exploitation of both *The Toll of Justice* and *The Traitor Within* suggests that the two shared much in common. The Ohio Board of Censors commented, after passing *The Toll of Justice*, that

'while the board was not what would ordinarily be termed Klan propaganda it did have a distinctly Klan atmosphere.'⁵³ The film, as with *Birth*, may not have focussed entirely on the Klan but, as I will show, the film was promoted, discussed and exhibited as a Klan film, and thus the presentation of the Klan within the film became its defining feature.

The Klan within *The Toll of Justice* was not a violent racist group, but rather a moral force, protecting threatened womanhood (as in *Birth*) and administering prohibition (as in *One Clear Call*). An advert for the film succinctly explained the Klan role within the film: 'Do away with the underworld- Protect clean womanhood.'⁵⁴ These two issues are linked together within *Toll* as the female heroine, Billy, who is hunting her father's killer, is captured and tied up in Haskell's drinking den. A lecherous drinker then starts putting his hands on Billy, effectively assuming the role of Gus from *Birth*. Joan Silverman highlighted how the issue of race was closely linked to drink, particularly in the work of Thomas Dixon. Silverman suggested that Griffith implies within *Birth* that prohibition is 'necessary to quell racial unrest and its attendant evil, miscegenation.'⁵⁵ Drink, as I suggested, was an important signifier of villainy within early film, but the Klan, which regularly defended itself in public against charges of racism, does not directly link drink with the issue of race in this film. The film instead highlights the threat drink poses to women, while also showing more broadly the dangers faced by independent women within modern society.

Billy, in the tradition of the earlier female serials (and most notably *Heart O' The Hills*), undertakes the role of the investigator for her father's death.⁵⁶ The motherless Billy, with her masculine name and modern clothes (she wears trousers) races around in a modern car and climbs out of a plane in mid-air.⁵⁷ The film may attempt to recreate the excitement of the earlier serials, but while those produced by the industry may, as Stamp and Singer speculate, be viewed as liberating and empowering to the female spectator, *The Toll of Justice* would appear to serve more clearly as a warning. Billy is helpless as she is captured and tied up by the villainous men, and she is ultimately reliant on male protection. This independent modern woman is subsequently reformed as an example to the modern Klanswoman. The WKKK was a

powerful institution particularly in Indiana, where Kathleen Blee suggested its 250,000 members comprised half of the Klan's total for the state.⁵⁸ The women's Klan as a powerful female group actively sought to promote traditional, clearly defined gender roles. Billy, while not depicted as a Klanswoman, ultimately recognises these distinct gender roles, investigating her father's death and then calling for the male night riders to resolve the situation. The Klan responds, as an intertitle states, to 'the appeal which stirs every man to vow allegiance to this brave little girl and help bring the criminals to JUSTICE.' The independent modern woman is now presented as a 'brave little girl.' Unlike in *Heart O' The Hills*, she does not ride with the Klan herself, and the Klan appears to qualify the definition of modern womanhood put forward by the female serials.

The Toll of Justice, as with the earlier serials, repeatedly emphasises that Billy's independence was enforced by the break-up of her family. The film highlights the importance of family, and in particular of the mother, as a dominant moral force. The crimes of Saunders, a captured villain recovering in hospital, are shown in relation to his mother. Depicted in flashback baking a cake and described as 'lavender and old lace,' Saunders' mother serves as her son's conscience and as a protector of traditional moral order. She sobs as the intertitle remarks 'Love best must suffer most' and earlier in the film, when Tom Grant is falsely arrested, his mother is shown sobbing as her son is led away. The film presents the criminal activities as a betrayal of the mother and as a breakdown of traditional family order. Billy's actions, and the subsequent danger she faces, are a direct response to her father's death, and the Klan assumes a paternal role in protecting her.

The Klan's appearance within *The Toll of Justice* shared much in common with the mainstream films discussed in the previous chapter, with the Klan costume presented as a spectacle generating excitement. A poster for the film emphasised 'Mystery, Action, Thrills' adding that there are '20,000 robed Klansmen in action' (see fig. 7). Other posters promised 'Love thrills and excitement' and 'Mystery, thrills, laughs.' *The Traitor Within* was similarly described as 'a modern drama, full of life and action,' a film 'depicting actions of the K.K.K.'⁵⁹ In *The Toll of Justice* the Klan is first

shown joining hands in a circle under the American flag. A covering of whiteness fills the screen as Billy makes a speech in front of the flag, before the Klansmen get on their horses and ride. There are repeated shots of Klansman running and close-ups of the distinctive costume. The scene appears remarkably similar to the Klan rescue in *Birth* and adverts for the film positively emphasised the similarities with Griffith's film. A poster for *The Toll of Justice* claimed that the film 'is next to "The Birth of a Nation" for cast, story, settings and direction,' while a report on *The Traitor Within* remarked that 'while it will not be shown at movie houses, it is claimed to be in a class with "The Birth of a Nation".'⁶⁰

The Toll of Justice and *The Traitor Within* both had ambitions to emulate the financial and propagandist success of *Birth*, and independent Klan films positively aligned themselves with *Birth*. *The New York World* reported that *Yesterday, To-Day and Forever* was intended as 'a screen spectacle to imitate and outrival "The Birth of a Nation".'⁶¹ *The White Rider*, screened in Lincoln, Nebraska, in December 1925 was, according to *The Lincoln Sunday Star*, 'destined to grip the hearts of Americans as completely and become as popular as "The Birth of a Nation".'⁶² Mark Dintenfass, when trying to generate interest for his Klan picture in 1921, referred to the 'opposition "the Birth of a Nation" excited when first presented and the big profit that later accrued because of the very opposition availed in some instances.'⁶³ I have suggested throughout my work that *Birth* greatly directed industrial attitudes towards the Klan on film. Producers of mainstream films, wary of censorship and controversy, rarely presented the Klan as the subject of a film, and often positioned the night riders in a distant time and setting, as a group carefully removed from the modern Klan. In complete contrast, many independent Klan productions presented the modern Klan as the subject and positively emphasised the links with the modern group and with Griffith's controversial film.

The Toll of Justice and *The Traitor Within*, much like *The Mysterious Eyes of the Ku Klux Klan* before it, prioritised the local scenes of Klan activities. Reports explained that *The Toll of Justice* included scenes 'within an actual meeting of the hooded organization,' while a further report in Columbus remarked that 'the latter

scenes were photographed at Buckeye Lake, and are telling shots, in as much as a Konklave was being held there at the time and thousands of the Klan were available for the picture.⁶² Posters highlighted that the film was ‘made in and by Columbus people,’ while others emphasised that the film contained the ‘first scenes of the K. K. K. in session.’⁶³ Posters for the film’s first extended showing in Newark contained a large picture from the Buckeye Lake meeting, while an advert for *The Traitor Within* in Indiana emphasised that the film featured ‘the world’s greatest night parade at Fort Wayne.’ *The Fiery Cross* in Indiana reported that ‘part of the picture was filmed at Fort Wayne during the big armistice celebration held by the Klan there. A great part of the magnificent parade at that place is shown in the film.’⁶⁴

The Klan’s stage plays, like its films, also promised to offer an inside view of the Klan. For *The Flaming Cross*, a ‘play accurately depicting the principles of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan’ which played throughout Kansas in the spring of 1923, ‘the audience is permitted to “sit in” on a modern Klan meeting,’ while in *The Mysterious Way*, ‘the big scene is with the Klavern in full regalia.’⁶⁵ Even a seemingly negative depiction of the Klan, like *Behind the Mask*, which was written by C. Anderson Wright, a man described in posters as ‘exposer of and former Grand Goblin’ of the Klan, offered to show the inner workings of the Klan and ‘many startling revelations.’ An advert for a staging in Connecticut promised to explain ‘the entire operation of this gigantic organization that rides in the night.’⁶⁶ There are consistent tropes in the representation of the Klan in both films and stage plays, but the Klan, while appearing to conform to industrial expectations in its narrative structure, formally differentiated from mainstream film by articulating a reality within the fictional framework. This constant emphasis on presenting ‘truth’ and reality, most evident in publicity materials, strengthens the pedagogical function of these films for the Klan, and further exploits the innate mystery that surrounds the Klan. It also ensures that these films and plays are presented to the public as ‘Klan’ productions, as they must highlight their authenticity in revealing the ‘truth.’ For example, when the St Joseph Klan in Missouri produced *The Mysterious Way*, a play described as a ‘powerful lesson in Klankraft’ in May 1923, a report in *Searchlight* explained that the play was ‘written by

a Klansman [Floyd P. Lee], is being produced by a Klansman, and all of the male characters in the production are members of the Invisible Empire.’⁶⁷

The representation of the Klan within these independent films greatly directed the level of distribution they received and the sites of exhibition in which they were shown. By addressing the modern Klan and positively emphasising their Klan links, independent Klan films confronted the restrictions and industrial concerns that surrounded depictions of the Klan during the 1920s. *The Toll of Justice* and *The Traitor Within* evidently had ambitions for widespread distribution, but as the Klan repeatedly criticised the perceived Jewish influences within the film industry, these films had to present themselves as distinct from, and indeed in opposition to, mainstream films. This coupled with the difficulties facing all independent films, ensured that independent Klan films largely struggled to expand beyond brief, specialist local screenings. These films, while heavily influenced by mainstream cinema, ultimately appealed predominantly to Klansmen and women, as local Klan groups used the screenings of independent Klan films to promote their local group.

‘The picture that every red blooded American should see’: Attracting the Klansman

When *The Toll of Justice* was first shown in Columbus on 9 December 1923, it was screened at the Apollo Theatre before a select audience of Kleagles and Cyclops from local Klan groups, who had gathered to discuss plans for the next year’s Klan activities. Admission was by card early, and from the outset it appeared that, despite earlier claims to the contrary, *The Toll of Justice* was targeting an audience comprised predominantly of Klansmen. This is also evident in the posters and adverts used to promote screenings of the film.⁶⁸

The Toll of Justice made its first public appearance at The Rex Theatre in Newark in December 1923, and it was advertised as ‘a show that interests every AMERICAN MAN, WOMAN OR CHILD.’ The film (and its audience) was defined as distinctly American, and adverts went a step further when promoting the film a few

weeks later in Dayton, Ohio, presenting it as 'the picture that every red blooded American should see.'⁶⁹ This line appeared frequently on adverts for the film, and when *The Traitor Within* was shown at the Cadle Tabernacle in Indianapolis in March 1924, it too was advertised as 'A PICTURE THAT EVERY RED-BLOODED AMERICAN SHOULD SEE' (see fig. 5). A review in *The Protestant Home Journal* for a screening in Sugarcreek, described the film as 'a drama of American life, personified by American characters familiar to everyone of us. Every AMERICAN should see this picture.'⁷⁰

These adverts are significant not only in attracting Klansmen and women to the films, but also in their attempts to differentiate these Klan-made (and Klan adopted) films from the supposedly 'foreign' industry films. *The Traitor Within* described itself as 'The Greatest of all American Pictures' and emphasised that it was 'produced for, owned and controlled by Protestants.' Further adverts highlighted that 'It's all American' and that 'It is a clean American picture.'⁷¹ The film emphasised its national, racial and religious identity, while an advert for *The Toll of Justice* in Noblesville, Indiana reiterated that 'this is a real picture. Not a mediocre cast and settings, but is next to "The Birth of a Nation" for cast, story, settings and direction.' When *The White Rider* was shown in 1925, adverts emphasised that the film was 'morally clean,' as the Klan sought to overcome the inherent contradictions in its use of film, by differentiating itself from the immoral 'foreign' films that it opposed.⁷² This differentiation made it difficult for the Klan to compete and operate within the established film market, even though initially both *The Toll of Justice* and *The Traitor Within* followed some existing conventions in terms of representation and promotion (for example, emphasising 'an all star cast').

When *The Toll of Justice* was shown in Columbus in January 1924 adverts not only promoted the film, but also the values of the modern Klan. 'CLEAN UP CRIME AND FILTH' and 'PROTECT OUR WOMEN' appeared in two boxes, as the Klan was promoted not only through the film but also through the publicity and discourses surrounding the film.⁷³ A further advert for the film at Bowman School Auditorium urged the viewer to 'Rid your city of crime,' while an advert for a run at the Palace Theatre in Ashland wrote in large bold capitalised letters above the film's title 'Do away with the divorce

preciated

references would be strength- and forwarded by this logical mination. I wish God's bless- in your publication and on your ublic order. May they both re- rooted in the wholesome fear ove of Almighty God, and in sphere of influence do such works as shall redound to the g good and welfare of this, est and truest of all the lands erica. Fraternally yours,
FRANCIS E. SCHROEDER.

Cold Winters to Come

the little planet Mercury re- around our sun every 88 the companion of Sirius is a evolving around the giant sun r Sirius every 50 years, says a utor to the New York Herald. en the planet Mercury arrives greatest distance east of our it begins moving toward the and forces the earth outward the sun, causing colder spells eather, as it did this January. e manner, when the companion us arrives at its position east us it begins moving toward un, earth and solar system and s them outward from the giant Sirius, thereby causing colder s of weather on the earth and ts and sun spots on the sun. vers the temperature of the en- solar system. resulted in the terrible winters 08, 1420, 1422, 1430, 1603, 1709, and others as it came around s and moved indirectly toward solar system. It also caused the winters between 1872 and 1892. 1924 to 1944 will occur oc- nally the coldest winters of its ar weather cycle. Therefore, 1924 to 1944 the winters will uch like the winters from 1872 92, with the exception of some tions caused by the planets not in the same positions now that were then. ars ago when the solar system ed across the companion's orbit e near the longitude of the node aused glacial periods on the 1.

inds Perfect Son-in-Law

LOUIS, Mo., March 8.—De- ing him as the "perfect son-in- "Mrs. Mary Davis has filed pro- ings to adopt Matt C. Nord, 26 a old. Nord has lived with his her-in-law since his wife died years ago, and Mrs. Davis ex- ned she wanted to adopt him so e would be no "legal tangle" her estate when she died.

asking that the shoe manufacturers receive a hearing before the Senate follows the example of the House in reporting an appropriation for the proposed factory.

The manufacturers held that the penitentiary factory would deprive the shoe industry of approximately \$5,000,000 a year in contracts.

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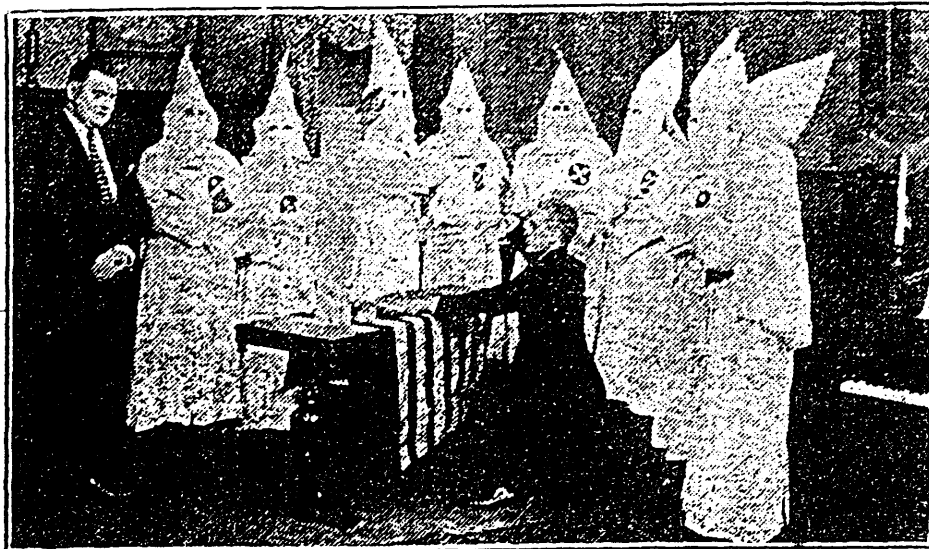
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evil.⁷⁴ The Klan emphasised the performative role of film, seeking to influence social behaviour not only through the film, but also through the publicity surrounding the film. These films appeared at a time when propaganda was being theorised more widely, and the constant dogged emphasis on reality appears in contrast to the conventions of Hollywood, which often presented films as escapism, removed from reality.⁷⁵ A full page advert for *The Toll of Justice* in *Kluxer*, a Klan magazine, stated 'Do away with the Underworld,' 'Clean our Country of Filth' and 'Protect Clean Womanhood.' This poster (See fig. 6) contained a picture of a Klan hood with a question mark wrapped around it. The tagline read 'See "The Toll of Justice" for the answer.' The poster doesn't clarify what the question is, but it does suggest once more that exhibitors were looking to exploit the mystery surrounding the Klan, and that this film was purporting to offer an official 'truth' about the group.⁷⁶

The Toll of Justice was shown in Columbus at Memorial Hall for a week with two performances each day, and the film evidently attracted strong interest from local Klan groups. A report in the *Columbus Dispatch* detailed that 'about 1000 members of the Columbus chapter of the Ku Klux Klan will meet Saturday evening ... to march in a body to Memorial hall, where they will view the Klan movie, *The Toll of Justice*.' The report explained that the Klan band would lead the marchers. The Columbus chapter sponsored viewings of the film and these independent Klan productions were regularly put on by and for local Klan groups.⁷⁷

The Junior Klan in Akron organised the two-day screening of *The Toll of Justice* in March 1925, with the *Youngstown Citizen* reporting that 'the lessons taught will make a lasting impression.' The Women of the Ku Klux Klan in Putnam County sponsored a screening of *The Traitor Within* at Cook's Opera House in Greencastle, Indiana in February 1924, and local Klan groups regularly arranged screenings of these two films.⁷⁸ *The Traitor Within* was shown 'under the auspices of the Ku Klux Klan' at the Jefferson Theatre in Decatur in July 1924, and again the film was staged as a Klan event, with electric crosses placed on each side of the stage. A report in the *Decatur Review* explained that 'members of the Klan in full regalia acted as ushers' and a woman 'dressed in full regalia, sang a solo.'⁷⁹ Screenings of these films were also used

The Picture That Every Red Blooded American Should See

MYSTERY

ACTION

THRILLS

20,000

See "The Toll of Justice"
for the Answer

Air

Robed

Plane

Klansmen

Battle

In

To

Mid Air.

.....

The

Dash

To Death

Rescue

An Epoch
in



Screen
History

In An

Auto

Do Away With the Underworld

Clean Our Country of Filth

Protect Clean Womanhood

MEMORIAL HALL, DAYTON, OHIO

JANUARY 5, 6, 7, 8, 1924

to benefit the local Klan groups. When *The Traitor Within* was shown at the American Theatre in Hamilton County, Indiana in January 1924, the money from the screening benefited the 'charity fund for Hamilton County Klan.' The distributors, Hoosier Distributors, did not attempt to distribute the film through established (industrial) channels, instead advertising the film for distribution within the *Fiery Cross* in Indiana, and encouraging local Klan groups to sponsor and organise screenings of the film.⁸⁰

When *The Toll of Justice* did play at established theatres, the local Klan group usually hired the venue. Above posters for *The Toll of Justice* at the Rex Theatre were further adverts explaining that 'The Rex Theatre has been leased to the Miafa Picture Co. during this week.' The Palace Theatre in Ashland was also 'rented to outside parties' for *The Toll of Justice*, while the film was shown 'under the auspices of the Ku Klux Klan' for two days at The Strand Theatre in Ohio.⁸¹ There is evidence of local Klan groups hiring out established cinemas before these Klan films were made. In December 1921 the Enid Klan No. 5 in Oklahoma placed a donation of \$25 under the door of the Rialto theatre. The donation was offered as a 'Christmas gift' to ensure that 'all the poor children of Enid' could attend the theatre free of charge. The Klan requested that the theatre provide a 'suitable program especially for the children' and through this enterprise the Klan not only generated publicity for itself but also presented itself as a charitable, educative force.⁸² By hiring out the theatre, the Klan established its own identity within the community as a purveyor of moral good, but by 1924 some theatres appeared wary of associating with the Klan, even if the Klan was merely using their facilities.

L. J. McCormick, the manager of the Mecca theatre in Decatur, Illinois agreed to hire out his cinema for a two day screening of *The Traitor Within* in January 1924. The screening was organised by Mr. Showalter, a representative of the Klan, who independently distributed bills 'showing several men in the K.K.K. outfit, white gown and cap' to advertise the film.⁸³ However, the show was cancelled after parts of the motion picture machine were stolen. The Klan referred to the thief as the 'enemy within,' a term used extensively in Klan literature to describe its immigrant opponents, and reports offered in the *Decatur Daily Democrat* presented the theft as a direct attack

on the Klan. A note left after the parts were stolen explained that 'these parts will be returned by Saturday providing no more K. K. K. pictures are shown in Decatur.'⁸⁴

McCormick, concerned by the extreme reactions provoked by this intended screening, refused to allow the Klan promoter Showalter to use a portable machine and refunded him the money paid for the lease. *Dawn* presented the theft as a forceful, calculated attack on the Klan, writing that 'the manager was frightened into cancelling the engagement after the film had been shown one night.' In contrast, McCormick claimed that 'he believed some friend of theirs took the parts and would return them.' He recognised the theft as a protest against the Klan, and aligned himself (and his theatre) with the anti-Klan protestor. He explained that 'no attempt would be made to prosecute the person who took them if they were returned by Saturday.' McCormick, as the theatre manager, was extremely quick to cancel the show and appeared particularly concerned about the effect associating with the Klan would have on his reputation (and that of his theatre). He stated that 'it has been rumored that I am a member of the Klan. This is untrue.'⁸⁵

The incident further highlights the extreme reactions generated by depictions of the Klan on screen, and also suggests that screening Klan films inferred a theatre's support for the organisation. This discouraged exhibitors from hiring out their theatres for Klan films, and as independent Klan films did not enjoy widespread distribution, it was often difficult to find a suitable venue for these films. *The Traitor Within* and *The Toll of Justice* thus both played in non-theatrical venues such as churches, community halls and schools.

Education and entertainment: Non-theatrical Klan exhibition

The Toll of Justice was shown at a local school in Homer, Michigan in October 1924 before an 'audience that packed the building to overflowing.' *Searchlight* reported that 'Mrs. Squires, the teacher, was greatly pleased at the results,' as the Klan sought to legitimise both the films and itself by positioning them within schools and churches.⁸⁶ *Toll* also showed at the High School Auditorium in Elyria, Ohio in March 1925. The

school board originally turned down the request 'made by a representative of the Ku Klux Klan' because the school would not allow 'any entertainment that might cause racial or religious dissension.' A member of the school board, on the Klan's suggestion, went to view the film in Cleveland (where it was playing for three nights at Engineers Auditorium) and decided that there was 'nothing objectionable about the picture and there was very little so-called Ku Klux propaganda about it.' The film was thus shown at the school, not only offering the film legitimacy, but also establishing the film as tool for education. The screening further aligned the Klan with local schools and presented the group as an organisation, positively influencing and educating young Americans.⁸⁷

A preview of the screening claimed that 'it is not essentially a Klan picture, [but] it is receiving the endorsement and support of Klans wherever shown.' Adverts for this screening emphasised the director and star (Mildred Melrose) and described it as 'a story of hate and revenge- love and a girl.' The Klan elements were underplayed here with the poster merely reporting that it was 'a story in which the Klan takes part.'⁸⁸ The film had also played at Bowman School Auditorium in 1924, and again the Klan elements were not directly mentioned, with posters emphasising the 'beautiful love story' and the action and excitement within the film. The poster described the film as 'a picture that most of you have read about and all want to see.' Local churchmen monitored the films shown at the Bowman School and *The Mansfield News* explained a year earlier in 1923 that 'only the very best films have been selected by Mr. Creveling [the program organiser] and ones which may be seen by the children without any harmful results whatever.'⁸⁹

Movie Weekly drew a parallel between the Klan's production of *The Toll of Justice* and its recent purchase of Valparaiso University, noting that the acquisition of an entire educational institution was 'a move on the Klan's part to take a hand in educating American youth along certain principles.'⁹⁰ The Klan which, as I showed in chapter two, heavily criticised mainstream films for the destructive influence they had on the morals of women and children, now presented film as an educative device within a school setting. Furthermore, the Klan sought to attract children to the films, with a special showing of *The Traitor Within* arranged at 9.30 in the morning for school

children in Muncie in February 1924. The children were admitted free of charge and a further screening was arranged for the children of Delaware County Children's Home. When *The Toll of Justice* played in Ashland, a special 4.15 afternoon screening was organised for local school children. The price was reduced so that 'each and every boy and girl may see this production before it leaves town.'⁹¹

Both *The Toll of Justice* and *The Traitor Within* highlighted the educative role that the Klan believed film should play within society. *Decatur Review* described *The Traitor Within* as 'an educational motion picture,' while *The Marion Daily Star* presented *The Toll of Justice* as 'a lesson in patriotism which arouses in the bosom of the sturdy youth a love for his native flag and causes the blood of the old to flow with new zest.'⁹² The Klan emphasised its close links with education, to spread its own message, legitimise itself, and justify its use of film. The Klan's close links with the church were also highlighted in advertisements for these films. For example, an advert for *The White Rider* in *The Lincoln Star* in 1925 stated that 'ministers are especially invited to attend,' as the Klan continued to present itself as a religious group, seeking the support of Protestant churchmen.⁹³

The Traitor Within was shown 'under the auspices of the Lawrence Community Brotherhood of the Lawrence M. E. Church' at The Cadle Tabernacle in March 1924. The Lawrence M.E. Church near Fort Harrison was in need of a properly equipped community building, and used this Klan film as a fundraiser.⁹⁴ The anti-Klan publication *Tolerance* described the Cadle Tabernacle as a 'focus of bitter bigotry' and wrote an extensive piece in 1923 reporting that its founder, E. Howard Cadle, was on the 'Klan roll.' *Tolerance* subsequently suggested that there were disputes within the management of the Tabernacle over its Klan affiliation, but by the time *The Traitor Within* was shown there in March 1924, the venue was firmly established as a centre for Klan activity.⁹⁵ The *Indiana Catholic and Record* noted the established Klan presence there, when commenting:

These Klan fellows have no sense of humor. Outside Cadle Tabernacle, advertising an anti-Catholic picture-show, they have the very appropriate sign,

“The Traitors Within.” The Cadle Tabernacle, being a Klan headquarters is the natural home of traitors.⁹⁶

The Tabernacle showed educative religious pictures, and had been sued by Epic Film Attractions after E. Howard Cadle had described Epic’s ‘motion picture version of the old testament,’ *After Six Days*, as ‘lewd, lascivious and immoral.’⁹⁷ Cadle evidently had exacting standards and demanded a high moral tone from the films shown there, but *The Traitor Within*, like the Klan itself, was established within this religious context. The film (and the Klan’s) religious validity was further strengthened by the series of lectures offered each night during the run of *The Traitor Within*. On the opening night, the evangelist, Dr. E. J. Bulgin, earlier described by *Tolerance* as a ‘foul-mouthed sensationalist,’ spoke before the film was screened.⁹⁸ *The Traitor Within* played at other Tabernacles, including the Scoville Tabernacle in Muncie, where its extended run led to the postponement of the scheduled Lord’s Day Alliance meetings. The film followed the well-attended Scoville evangelistic meetings and the Tabernacle again provided a religious context in which the film (and by extension the Klan) could be received.⁹⁹ The church, such an important basis for the Klan’s support during the 1920s, was a recognised exhibition site, with groups like the Church Motion Picture Corporation in New York and the Church Film Company in Boston producing films specifically for exhibition in churches.¹⁰⁰ The Klan gained legitimacy through its close relations with the church and the independent film screenings emphasised the Klan’s established role within Indiana and Ohio as a religious, moral educator. It also illustrated the Klan’s use of film as an educative device, further distinguishing its film once more from the immoral entertainment that the Klan so condemned.

The entertainment bureau: Klan plays and staged entertainment

Klan groups, particularly in Indiana and Ohio, used these films extensively within a variety of exhibition contexts, as propaganda and entertainment programs were hugely important to the modern Klan. State and local Klan groups established

entertainment bureaus which were responsible for booking up suitable lectures and plays. Notes from the Ohio Klan in 1923-24 show how organised the entertainment programs were throughout the state. One of the notes states that: '1. The entertainment bureau will have two dramatic companies for the winter season.' These are to be 'clean, wholesome comedy-dramas' which must be recommended by the state office. The 'actors must be high class and their morals above criticism.' The note again responds to the same concerns expressed by the Klan regarding film morality, as the entertainment bureau differentiated its plays from the perceived foreign and immoral productions regularly presented.¹⁰¹

At the same time in 1924, Charles Palmer, the head of the Klan in Illinois, organised the first Klantauqua. Palmer explained in *Variety* that 'the Klantauquas were originated with the idea of bringing before the public the order of the K.K.K. We discovered early that to do this we had to supply clean and legitimate entertainment.' The Klan used popular acts to attract locals to the event, before Klan speakers, who were in many cases ministers, would attempt to recruit new members. Many of the acts booked, such as 'the Gypsy Serenaders' would have no discernible connection with the Klan, and a number of the plays booked by the entertainment bureau similarly did not directly address the Klan, but rather followed the bureau's remit of offering 'clean wholesome comedy-dramas.'¹⁰²

As an example, The Ladies of Foster Memorial Church put on the humorous play 'Clubbing a Husband' at the Klavern in Youngstown in 1925. The Youngstown Choral Club gave a program at the Klan farm a few months later, and musical programs formed a strong basis of the Klan's entertainment program.¹⁰³ The bureau was instructed to 'keep at least two musical companies of high class' and many Klans set up their own bands, with the Chicago Klan claiming in 1924 to have the world's largest band of six hundred pieces.¹⁰⁴ Klan groups would often provide musical accompaniment at meetings and lectures, while local Klan groups regularly provided concerts and staged shows both in Klaverns and in larger public areas. For example, a big Minstrel Show was given by the American Glee Club in Indiana 'under the auspices of the Ku Klux Klan at the Klan park' for three nights in August 1924. The show was

staged in Ohio two months later. The WKKK in Ohio also organised a Minstrel Show at the American Legion Hall in Dover for the benefit of the Klan, with another show produced three months later. The Fort Worth Klan was rehearsing for a Minstrel Show in Texas, when their Klavern was burnt down in 1924.¹⁰⁵ Local Klan papers indicated the large number of minstrel shows, plays and concerts staged and sponsored by local Klan groups, but more noteworthy for this project is the large number of plays, positively addressing the modern Klan, produced by Klan groups during this period.

I have suggested throughout this chapter that many of the representation tropes within film are consistent in stage plays as well, as the Klan on stage and screen addressed the misrepresentation of the Klan by its enemies and presented its plays and films as a 'true' representation of the modern Klan. The Klan appeared to use stage plays in a similar manner to its films, with the James H. Hull Klan play, *The Awakening* for example, presented as a 'wonderful, educational, moral, dramatic masterpiece.' Adverts emphasised the educative role of this Klan play, explaining that 'every school child in Roanoke should see 'The Awakening'.'¹⁰⁶ The plays also served to financially benefit local Klan groups. When *The Awakening* played in Texas in May 1924, the *Port Arthur News* reported that the Beaumont Klan no. 7 (for whom the play was produced) would gain a net profit of about \$10,000. Local Klan groups in Port Arthur immediately began negotiating with James Hull to bring the play to their community, and when *The Awakening* did arrive a month later, with a lot of publicity in the local paper, the play was presented at The Elks theatre by Dick Dowling Klan No. 25 and The Women of the Ku Klux Klan.¹⁰⁷

The exhibition of these plays shared much in common with the Klan made films. The Klan productions featured at both theatrical and non-theatrical venues, appearing at Klan gatherings and in Klaverns. *The Mysterious Way* played in Missouri at the Lyceum Theatre, and *The Invisible Empire* appeared in theatres throughout the South (including Springer's Opera House in Georgia, where *The Face at Your Window* was presented as a Klan film). The Klan comedy *Safety First* was presented at the Klan Klavern in Akron in 1925, and was also staged at Winchester Hall in Frederick, MD, when it was produced by 'the boys and girls of Grace Reformed Senior Christian Endeavor

Society.’¹⁰⁸ The Ashland Klan put on *The Martyred Klansman*, a ‘thrilling patriotic drama’ that teaches ‘the mission of the Klan,’ at the Opera House in February 1925, and *The Birth of a Klansman*, sponsored by the Junior organ of the Franklin County Klan, was shown at Knights of Malta Hall at Massillion in the same month. These plays, and the many others produced, provided entertainment for the Klan within its entertainment program, but they also sought to extend the Klan’s message into the local community. *The Protestant Home Journal* reported on a forthcoming staging of *The Martyred Klansman* in 1925, and suggested that ‘not only should Klansmen see this play but every person in the county should be given the opportunity to see it and therefore be made a better citizen.’¹⁰⁹

When *The Awakening* appeared in Port Arthur, the local press reported that the ‘entire cast’ of three hundred and twenty was ‘selected in Port Arthur,’ as the play incorporated locals into the play in order to attract people to the production regardless of their Klan affiliations. *The Awakening* attempted to reach out beyond an existing Klan audience, by emphasising its educative role and by prioritising the local interest within the production.¹¹⁰ However, as I have suggested, the films (and plays), in offering to reveal the ‘truth’ behind the Klan, highlighted their authenticity as genuine Klan productions, and so the reception of these productions was invariably dictated by attitudes towards the modern Klan. The critical reaction to *The Invisible Empire*, which I discussed in chapter two, certainly suggests that support for these Klan productions also inferred a support for the modern organisation. The Klan newspaper *Dawn* urged ‘Protestants and members of the Ku Klux Klan, Go see this show,’ while the anti-Klan *Evening Post* in Chicago widely condemned *The Invisible Empire* and suggested that the play should be used to ‘torture’ the Klan’s enemies; ‘No punishments for crimes, treasons and misdemeanors could be more dire than to abduct the guilty wretch and take him on a joy ride to a performance of this show.’¹¹¹

The modern Klan plays may have appealed predominantly to an established Klan audience, but the Klan’s involvement in staging and sponsoring plays did help to promote the Klan’s image locally. This could be achieved, for example, by staging events by established Protestant groups like The American Glee Club, by offering

proceeds from events to the local church or, in the example of *The Invisible Empire*, by printing a series of adverts for local Klan-affiliated establishments within the play's programme.¹¹² In its attempt to reach beyond an existing Klan audience, the Klan also exploited established stage shows, like Thomas Dixon's *The Clansman*. When *The Clansman* played in Arkansas in 1924, the Klansmen of Eldorado No.92 took over the third act. During this act 'a class of aliens was naturalized upon the stage before a huge audience.' *Imperial Night-Hawk* commented that 'the play was a very good drawing card, and the Arkansas Klan made a thousand new friends in one night.'¹¹³ The group used the play for recruitment, just as other Klan groups had used *Birth* and *The Face at Your Window*, and now adapted the text in order to directly address the modern Klan.

The Clansman, like *Birth*, generated interest in the modern Klan, even though it offered an historical depiction of a now outdated group. *The Clansman* played under the title *Ku Klux Klan* for two days at The Empress in Decatur in March 1922. The local press, while publishing adverts, did not mention this production, but on the opening night, an article appeared in *Decatur Review* asking 'Has the Ku Klux Klan invaded Decatur?' The article claimed that there was a lodge in Decatur which already had 1500 members, and appeared a couple of days after another report stating that sixteen men 'dressed in robes similar to the garb of the Ku Klux Klan' had visited a local funeral and laid a wreath. The staging of *Ku Klux Klan*, much like the screening of *The Face at Your Window* in Denver, appeared to launch the local Klan, or at least bring it to public attention. The play also showed at The Classic Theatre (a Klan supported theatre) in December 1922, and was advertised in the *Elwood Call Leader* on the same day that the paper reported a big Klan parade on its front cover. It is unclear whether the local Klan sponsored the shows, but they did generate awareness and publicity for the Klan.¹¹⁴

A number of Klan plays like *The Clansman* were produced independently and perhaps adopted or exploited by the local Klan groups. The Klan's presentation, promotion and exhibition of staged shows shared much in common with its approach towards film but, while staged plays were considered an integral part of an organised Klan entertainment program, film was rarely mentioned in these terms. Film is not considered within the official release of the entertainment bureau in Ohio, and it is

rarely mentioned in other contemporary Klan booklets. This may seem problematic, but the close parallels between the Klan's use of film and staged entertainment suggests that the Klan used film within its entertainment bureau, even though the Klan did not prioritise it in its publicity materials.

The entertainment bureau catered for three different types of meeting: open, invitational and closed. The open meetings included large outdoor Klan picnics, public speeches or Klantauquas, and did on occasion include a film program. For example in June 1924 'The super-Klan film' *The Traitor Within* was a feature of the big open-air demonstration staged at a racetrack in Plainfield Illinois. The program also included 'speaking, music, entertainment, and, of course, the naturalization of scores of this community's best men and women.' A month later, the Klans of Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana and Illinois organised a screening of *The Traitor Within* at a 'monster picnic' in the Klan Park in Racine, Wisconsin. The event also included Klan bands, clowns, acrobatic stunts, an aerial circus and a fireworks display, which included 'floating Klan crosses.'¹¹⁵ *The Traitor Within*, while advertised for distribution within the Klan press, was certainly not the only film used at public gatherings. The Jackson County Klan in Indiana intended to show *The Fifth Horseman* at a large gathering in Maquoketa in 1925. The film, which was not an official Klan production but was exploited by local Klan groups, particularly in Texas, could not be shown on this occasion because the film and the apparatus were stuck 'somewhere in the Iowa mud' after terrible weather.¹¹⁶

It is naturally harder to ascertain the extent to which local Klan groups used film at invitational and closed meetings. This would vary from each community, but certainly local Klan groups did use short educational pictures within their Klaverns. The National Board of Review compiled lists of suitable films 'for church use, school use etc.,' as well as pamphlets such as 'the Best Motion Pictures on Americanism' (*The Face at Your Window* received an honourable mention), which the WKKK in Indiana sent off for.¹¹⁷ The use of short films within an educational context was keenly promoted during the 1920s, as criticisms of the mainstream industry grew ever louder. Klan newspapers advertised some of these independent producers and film exchanges,

with *Searchlight*, for example, advertising the Scenic Film Corporation in Atlanta, which produced 'scenic, educational and commercial motion pictures.' The records of the Fort Wayne Klan contain a catalogue for Pilgrim Photoplay Exchange, 'distributing a carefully selected class of motion pictures to churches, schools, lodges, clubs, granges, Chautauguas, homes and all non-theatrical institutions where clean and highly censored pictures are appreciated.' The company was based in Chicago and although it distributed religious, factual, and feature films, including *Birth*, it certainly was not catering entirely to Klan or Protestant groups. The pamphlet included Catholic films like the *Parish Priest* that was said to be 'especially suitable for Catholic presentation.'¹¹⁸

The Fort Wayne records also include a film catalogue from the Bureau of Visual Instruction at Indiana University. The bureau, one of several such institutions offering educational and instructive short films, provided one-reel government films and a collection of patriotic shorts.¹¹⁹ The Fort Wayne records contain a telegram from Ross N. Lammott, the Kligrupp of Klan Number 60 Richmond, Indiana, to the Indiana University Visual Institution in May 1924 asking for a number of films. Lammott also asked the Bureau to 'send something for Saturday' and it is evident that the Klan had an ongoing membership with the bureau and presented educational and instructive films regularly within its Klaverns.¹²⁰

Even though official Klan releases do not appear to present film as a recognised and established part of the Klan entertainment program, films are evidently used in closed meetings as well as in grander public displays. Klan groups organised their own screenings and the Elkwood Klan Park in New Jersey, which was bought by the Red Bank and Long Branch Klans in 1924, intended to show a 'picture show twice a week' during the summer.¹²¹ The Klan made films, whether through necessity or desire, were often exhibited within the Klan's own program at non-theatrical venues. These independent films played at Klan events, at schools and at local halls and auditoriums, and were not widely distributed around established theatres. Exhibitors often appeared wary of showing these potentially controversial films and the Klan sought to position its films in venues sympathetic to the Klan cause in order to attract a regular audience of

Klansmen. There were, however, a number of cinemas, particularly in areas with a strong Klan following, that did appear sympathetic to the Klan, and that in some cases positively emphasised their Klan allegiance.

Klan theatres

The Urbana III Klan bought a local theatre in Illinois in 1923, intending to use the surrounding buildings as a new Klavern and Klan headquarters. The theatre itself was renamed the Zenith Theatre, and a report in *Imperial Night-Hawk* explained that 'the theatre will be operated under the management of Protestant Americans and a number of sterling attractions have already been booked.' The paper again emphasised that this theatre was under Protestant control, responding once more to the Klan's broad concerns about the foreign control of the entertainment industry. The theatre would house the Klan's entertainment programs, and indicates the Klan's desire to buy and control established, legitimate exhibition sites.¹²²

Klan newspapers contained adverts for a number of local theatres. *The Youngstown Citizen* regularly included listings for the Park Theatre, while the *Searchlight* advertised The Howard Theatre in Atlanta. The Howard Theatre later became The Paramount Theatre and throughout this period the cinema catered extensively for Paramount films. *Searchlight* offered a lengthy review of *While Satan Sleeps*, 'a Paramount production,' which played at the Howard. The paper described the film as a 'strong and wholesome story' and as 'a real picture.'¹²³ A further advert appeared for *When Knighthood was in Flower*, a Marion Davies film funded by William Hearst. The film, set during the American Revolution, played at the Rialto in Atlanta for two weeks in November 1922. The film had no discernable Klan links, and yet the advert sought to attract Klansmen to the theatre by including a tagline at the top of the poster:

Knights were bold in days of Old,
And a man was really a man.

That spirit is kept alive today
By Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.¹²⁴

It is unclear whether this advert was devised by the theatre but, just as The Springer Theatre had previously promoted *The Face at Your Window* as a Klan film, so too was The Rialto appealing directly to Klansmen through its publicity material.¹²⁵

The Classic Theatre in Elwood, Indiana regularly advertised in *The Fiery Cross*, and although its adverts said 'everybody welcome,' the regular adverts within the paper immediately aligned the theatre with the Klan. The manager, Mr L. O. Edison, encouraged readers to visit 'if you want to see GOOD PICTURES,' and the theatre showed 'The Ku Klux Klan play,' which was a dramatisation of 'The Clansman,' for two nights in December 1922. The theatre offered 'Klark's Kute Kids' in *My Broken Hearted Girl* in January 1924, and used musical entertainers that appeared on the bill with *The Traitor Within* and *The Toll of Justice* elsewhere in the state.¹²⁶ It presented a four-day run of *The Birth of a Nation* in February 1924, which it described as 'the most stupendous dramatic pageant in the world.' The run was extended, but the film had already shown at the nearby Martz theatre three months earlier. On that occasion the film was advertised as 'a real 100 per cent. picture in 12 big reels, put on by the Klan band.' When *One Clear Call* had also played locally, it appeared at the Baby Grand, and was described as 'a picture on a par and just as thrilling as *The Birth of a Nation*.' The advert acclaimed the 'hundreds of masked Midnight Riders Riding for Vengeance' and it is evident that films involving the Klan were popularly played across a number of theatres.¹²⁷ The Classic was not one of the larger and more successful theatres and, despite positioning itself in the Klan press, it rarely advertised itself in relation to the Klan, and did not, for example, show any of the independent Klan made films.

The Lincoln Square theatre in Indianapolis announced during December 1924 that it was 'under new management.'¹²⁸ The following month a large advert appeared in *The Fiery Cross* for *The Fifth Horseman*, which was to be shown there 'under the auspices of women's organization, Marion Co.' The film was often shown at Klan functions and, although not a Klan-made film as such, was heavily exploited by local

Klan groups. *The Fiery Cross* advertised the film's week at the Lincoln Square Theatre, with the familiar tagline - 'a picture every American should see.' The paper reported that the film, which 'presents a strong plea for Americanism, has played to packed houses at every performance' and, as a result, the film was carried over for a second week. A further advert now added that 'no real American can afford to miss it. A picture of America - for America.'¹²⁹

The WKKK of Marion may of course have hired out the Lincoln, but the following week the theatre began a two-week run of a Klan play, entitled *The Light. The Fiery Cross* advertised the play and described it as 'a play of thrills and intense interest to all Americans,' which concluded with a closing act in a Klan Klavern. The play involved the rescue of a young girl from an opium den by 'real Americans,' and *The Fiery Cross* proclaimed that the story 'presents the Klan in its true light.' A subsequent report explained that the play 'is being enthusiastically received by Klansmen' and the theatre would certainly appear to target a Klan audience from the beginning of 1925.¹³⁰

Theatres established a reputation locally, and a large number of theatres did become known within the local community as Klan establishments. *Indiana Citizens Post*, an anti-Klan paper, reported in 1924 that 'the Grand Theatre on Market Street [in Logansport] is losing a good percentage of its patrons since it has become known as a Kluxer joint.' The *Post* added that 'no doubt it will go the route of other Klan businesses.' In Portland, the exhibitor at the Blue Mouse Theatre described himself as '100% John Hamrick' in adverts, aligning himself with the popular local Klan group.¹³¹

Some theatres did show a number of Klan films without publicly revealing their Klan allegiance. The Alhambra in Decatur showed *The Mysterious Eyes of the Ku Klux Klan* on Friday 18 August, with *The Decatur Review* featuring a large advert with a picture of a Klan parade. The film played at The Alhambra the following night as well. On the Sunday, the Alhambra had a matinee and evening screening now under the title *The Inside Story of the Famous Ku Klux Klan*, with an advert explaining 'LAST DAY OF THE KLAN PICTURE.' The film, listed now as *The Mysterious Eyes of the Ku Klux Klan*, moved for one night on Monday to the Crescent Theatre, which had earlier in the year shown the play 'Ku Klux Klan.' The listing was included in The Alhambra's

advertisement for that night, suggesting that both theatres were under the same management.¹³²

In April 1923 *The Oglesby Observer*, a section of *Decatur Review* edited by pupils of the local Oglesby school, recalled an anecdote of a paperboy running 'very much frightened,' saying 'there's a Ku Klux Klan man coming.' The paper explained that it was only a man dressed up and riding a horse to advertise a 'Ku Klux Klan show to be given at the Alhambra.'¹³³ The paper doesn't confirm what the film was, but the following November it screened *One Clear Call* for a night, showing 'masked avengers ride.' In December 1924 the Alhambra screened *The Fifth Horseman* for two nights, a film that 'every red blooded American regardless of creed and color should see.' The Alhambra could seat over a thousand and was a prominent theatre in Decatur. It certainly did not exclusively show Klan pictures, and when *The Traitor Within* came to Decatur in 1924, the showman rented out The Mecca and did not show it in the Alhambra.¹³⁴

It can be difficult to establish the level of Klan involvement in local cinemas, but as Klan groups strongly opposed the film industry and the perceived Jewish control of film exhibition, it would appear not only that the Klan would endeavour to produce, distribute and exhibit its own pictures, but also that its controlled exhibition spaces would strongly differentiate themselves from the established 'Jewish' theatres that the group so opposed. Theatres, particularly in areas with a strong, influential Klan following, may directly target Klansmen not only for individual Klan films, but also for their regular program. When Mrs Livengood, the secretary of the women of the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, wrote to the National Board of Review in 1925 asking for information about suitable films for the Klan, she claimed that 'in fact the majority of the picture show attendance [in Indiana] is from our Orders.'¹³⁵ The Klan was embedded in communities within Indiana, Ohio and Illinois especially, and so while they may not have been an essential consideration for national distributors, in local areas, men and women, who defined themselves through the Klan, were an essential part of the film audience. Some theatres therefore appeared to cater almost exclusively

for Klansmen and women. This can be seen very clearly in a study of cinema exhibition practice within Noblesville, Indiana.

Film exhibition in Noblesville, Indiana

In November 1922, the *Noblesville Daily Ledger* contained a large advert for *The Mysterious Eyes of the Ku Klux Klan*, which was showing at The Opera House in Noblesville. Under the heading “Ku Klux Klan Movie Monday Night”, the *Ledger* reported that ‘Mr. McCaughney, manager of the Opera House, has made every effort to make the entire evening one of great enjoyment to everyone.’ McCaughney covered the theatre with branches and leaves and erected a ‘fiery cross, neatly arranged with electric lights’ on the balcony. The report recognised the established Klan support within the area, explaining that ‘the order seems to have an enormous following here.’ After three screenings of the film at the Opera House, the *Ledger* considered the film’s success: ‘There must be a large number of the Ku Klux Klan in this locality who desired to see the real merit of the Klan movie at the Wild Opera House Monday night or crowds must have flocked there through curiosity.’ The Klansmen did not publicly reveal themselves, as was often the case at screenings of *Birth*, but the theatre, and more specifically McCaughney, the manager who had arranged the elaborate screening, appeared eager to promote, or at least exploit, the local interest in the modern Klan.¹³⁶

Two months later, in February 1923, the Opera House screened *One Clear Call*. Once more adverts positively promoted the film on account of its Klan scenes, highlighting the words ‘Night Riders!’ and ‘Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,’ and featuring large pictures of riding Klansmen.¹³⁷ The theatre again appeared to be positively attracting local Klansmen, which may seem surprising, as the theatre was not a small independent picture house, but a three-storey building, bought in July 1922 by the prominent Indiana exhibitor Frank Rembusch. The theatre was considered a social centre within Noblesville, which makes its perceived Klan allegiance all the more significant for the local community.

In May 1923 the American Amusement Company was incorporated in Indiana, in order to establish a new motion picture house. The directors of the company were R. S. Truitt, Gray Truitt and C. E. McConaughy, the now-former manager of the Opera House.¹³⁸ A month later, The American Theatre opened in Noblesville, with McConaughy operating as manager. The initial report announcing the establishment of the theatre explained that 'the theatre is owned and controlled by home people,' with an advert for its opening describing the theatre as 'Hamilton County's own.' The report further revealed that there would be no matinees on Wednesday afternoon 'because the management wishes to recognize this Sunday school organization' which arranged Sunday school baseball games each Wednesday afternoon. The theatre also emphasised the modern seats, excellent ventilation and the careful 'accommodation of the ladies,' explaining that the theatre 'while not the largest in Noblesville is one of the most modern so far as the equipment is concerned.' The theatre positioned itself as a local, Protestant organisation, and immediately differentiated itself from the perceived foreign controlled, unsafe and morally unsound cinemas, that the Klan so strongly opposed.¹³⁹

The chosen name of the theatre further emphasised its patriotic ideals, with the venue launched as The American Theatre. Its advertising material showed an American flag draped through the A of 'American.' The American appeared acutely aware of its Klan clientele from the beginning, and only four days after opening, a poster for that night's film explained that 'you can see a complete show before or after the K.K.K. parade tonight.' The theatre's Klan affiliation became even more apparent when it showed *Birth* at the start of September. The film was advertised as 'the first 100% American photoplay ever produced,' and as a film 'endorsed by all Klansmen, ministers, schools, etc.' The advert stated that 'all Klansmen and all interested in the Ku Klux Klan are urged to see this picture,' with civil war veterans allowed in free.¹⁴⁰

The Birth of a Nation had played at The Opera House a few weeks earlier, and a rivalry between the two establishments was already apparent. The American advertised its forthcoming appearance of *Birth*, during the week that the film showed at the Opera House. When the Opera House showed *Birth*, it wrote 'don't be deceived for this is the last appearance of the real 'Birth of a Nation' so don't fail to see it.' An American

Theatre advert then read 'Note: D.W. Griffith's "Birth of a Nation" will positively be shown here.' A few days later, The Opera House countered with the warning that 'you may be disappointed if you don't see it now.' The two theatres may have been seeking the same audience, but both theatres appeared keen to establish its own regular audience, often advertising the theatre more prominently than the films they exhibited.¹⁴¹

After gaining new owners in November 1923, the Opera House advertised itself as 'Clean! Courteous! Comfortable! (The American may have used three Ks here!) and described itself as 'the theatre of class and tranquillity.' The American Theatre countered this, with McConaughy publishing a large advert later in November, listing a series of facts about his theatre. He began by stating that 'The American Theatre is the first theatre in Indiana to answer the long needed purpose of an Amusement House to show only Clean Pictures.' He then asked 'Did you know the American Theatre is owned by American citizens only, all over Hamilton County?' The advert concluded by explaining that, 'at a time when odds were against us and clean amusement furnished by Americans only was almost improbable, the present American Theatre management worried and worked day and night till the apparently impossible was accomplished for you and yours.' McConaughy was again responding to the Klan's criticisms of film and film exhibition, seeking clean pictures in a space owned and controlled by local Americans. McConaughy signed the statement 'Americanly yours' and appeared to challenge and position the American against all regular theatres, presenting the Opera House as the antithesis to the clean American values that his theatre promoted.¹⁴²

In November 1923, the Opera House announced that it was 'under new management and owners.' The new owners, the Kenworthy brothers, were evidently aware of the negative publicity surrounding the theatre and actually offered a \$1000 reward in a January edition of the *Ledger* 'for the person or persons who are circulating the report, and have any proof what ever that the Wild Opera House still belongs to, or is any way controlled by, F.J. Rembusch.' It is unclear who was spreading this rumour (and indeed why), but both theatres appeared acutely concerned with their own image. McConaughy seemed to advertise his theatre more than the films it was showing, and

the promotion of the theatre, and its clearly defined values, is evidently as important as the films themselves, in Noblesville.¹⁴³

McConaughy was eager to build a strong, loyal audience of people who felt that by going to his theatre they were promoting Americanism and opposing the foreign, morally insidious values popularly associated with modern film, cinema and Hollywood. In a note to patrons in November 1923, McConaughy wrote that 'this is our first opportunity to acknowledge our appreciation of the part you have played in making The American Theatre, "Hamilton County's own", the success it is.' The success of the theatre was clearly not measured in financial terms, as McConaughy admitted that the theatre was losing money and thus would have to put up prices. McConaughy established the American's identity as a local, morally clean theatre and, after showing 'Klan-O-Grams' in October 1923, McConaughy increasingly seemed to position the American as a Klan establishment.¹⁴⁴

The American Theatre showed *The Traitor Within* for three days in January 1924, with the screenings benefiting the Hamilton County Klan. A notice in *Noblesville Daily Ledger* promised '6 reels of thrills, happiness and facts.' The theatre also offered Mr. Mark Bills singing 'The Old Rugged Cross,' a Klan anthem, as an added attraction, along with a two-reel comedy entitled *Uncle Sam*. Adverts for the film emphasised that the film was 'produced for, owned and controlled by Protestants,' with 'produced for' highlighting that the film, like the American Theatre, was catering exclusively for a Protestant American (Klan) audience.¹⁴⁵ In April, the theatre showed *The Toll of Justice*, 'the great sensational Ku Klux Klan picture' and 'the one picture every red blooded American should see' (see fig. 7). A further advert positively called out to the Klansmen, exclaiming in bold capital letters 'Come on – All you Americans. This is Your Picture.' The poster further explained that the picture 'awakens you to the good of living in this big, Free Country of Ours.' These films specifically targeted the local Klan community, but adverts for the theatre emphasised that 'there was always a good program,' presenting suitable films for an established Klan audience, even when the theatre did not specifically show the Klan on screen.¹⁴⁶



REAL HARMONY
KEITH
ENTERTAINERS
A MUSICAL TREAT

Richard Barthelmess
with Dorothy Gish in
"THE BRIGHT SHAWL"
Replete with Thrills and Action.
Also Comedy—"3 CHEERS"

TODAY
AT OUR REGULAR PRICES . . . 10c, 25c

Tomorrow and Saturday
Great Sensational KU KLUX KLAN Picture

The Mialfa Pictures Company Inc.
Presents
"The TOLL OF JUSTICE"



MYSTERY
ACTION
THRILLS
AN ALL STAR CAST.

The one Picture Every Red Blooded American Should See. 20,000 Robed Klansmen in Action—Air Plane Battle in mid-air. Dash to death in an automobile. Do away with the underworld—Protect clean womanhood.

NOTE:—This is a real picture. Not a Mediocre cast and settings, but is next to "The Birth of a Nation" for cast, story, settings and direction.

8—Reels of Real Entertainment—8 Also Comedy.

ARCADIA NEWS ITEMS

near for \$1.00 Agent, Mrs. Amanda Weir, phone 55.

with the former's brother, F. A. Walz and daughters.

farm but must remain there to care for her stock and home.

An advert for The American Theatre in November 1923 explained the theatre's policy in selecting pictures: 'Every production is screened in advance of public showing and all improper scenes (if any) are cut out.'¹⁴⁷ The theatre responded to the popular criticisms about film morality, and often screened pictures by clean cut American stars like Hoot Gibson, who provided 'Blazing Red-Blooded Double-Barreled Action!' However, by July 1924, the theatre was advertising itself as 'the home of Paramount and First National Pictures,' despite the Klan's simultaneous, well publicised criticisms of Paramount. The theatre had screened *Manslaughter*, 'the 10 reel De Mille Paramount Special' in October 1923. It followed this with Gloria Swanson in *Her Gilded Cage*, and an advert in November 1923 proudly explained that 'we have shown you pictures from Paramount Specials.'¹⁴⁸ In July 1924, the theatre showed Pola Negri in *Shadows of Paris*. The Opera House had shown 'the incomparable' Negri in *Mad Love* in September 1923, but The American was now positively promoting 'Pola Negri starring in Paramount Pictures.' The theatre was evidently trying to compete with the Opera House, and so justified its use of Negri by describing the film as 'an All-American production with a foreign flavor.' The film, presented by the Klan in its criticisms of the industry as distinctly foreign, was now offered as All-American. Once more the issue of national identity was inherent in both the Klan's criticism and use of film.¹⁴⁹

During 1924 there were a series of changes at the American Theatre. In the spring, R.E. Thompson bought a controlling interest in the theatre, seemingly managing it himself for a few months, before he chose L. G. Heiny to take over as manager. Heiny was the chairman of the Republican County Central Committee, but had resigned as manager of American Security in Noblesville in January because of ill health. At the time he had expressed his desire to devote the coming year to political work, yet despite having no previous experience in film, the *Ledger* believed that Heiny 'should succeed in maintaining the patronage of the place.'¹⁵⁰

'Kool, Kozy and Klean': the end of The American Theatre¹⁵¹

Despite the change in owner and manager, The American continued as a strongly pro-Klan theatre, seeking to attract a loyal audience through self-promotion and by differentiating itself from other foreign owned, uncomfortable, and morally unsound cinemas. During the summer of 1924, the cinema's Klan affiliations became even more apparent. In August, the theatre advertised itself (again without any reference to any films showing) as 'Unquestionably 100 per cent,' emphasising the pure racial, religious and national identity of the theatre. The advert, appearing across the top of the page, asked 'How Strong is America?' adding;

Never in World's History, On Foreign Lands or Seas, was Uncle Sam's Glory
thrust down by any creed. Although the tide may ruffle, ships may drift astray,
we'll carry her to the highest peak and place her there to stay.¹⁵²

A few days later a further advert appeared asking 'Who's Who?' The advert again answered in rhyme:

To do a thing tomorrow, that should be done today, is not a pure bred Yankee, is
what the people say.

The stars with all their splendor, the stripes with all their might will do a thing
together, and see a thing done right.

The man who stops to linger, the man who stops to wait, are not the men old
glory would pick to do a fight.

The advert concluded with a line in bold explaining 'To do a thing and see it
through is true Yankee Red, White and Blue – American 100%.¹⁵³ The adverts again
presented an ideology for the theatre, attracting audiences not through the individual
films shown, but through highlighting that the theatre represented the values of the
Klan. Promoting the theatre as a Klan establishment encouraged audiences to trust the

manager in selecting films suitable for the theatre. Even though these films did not feature the Klan, and were often Paramount productions, the theatre justified the films shown by presenting itself as a distinctly American establishment, attracting and catering for Klansmen and women throughout the year.

The theatre responded to popular criticisms about cinema exhibition and, much like the Klan film companies, justified its own existence by presenting itself in opposition to other established theatres. The Klan presented its own films as local, American and Protestant and further highlighted that they were morally clean. Through these adverts the Klan offered an indirect criticism of films produced by the industry, and immediately differentiated its own film. The same can be seen with The American Theatre. Positioning itself as a local, purely American establishment, the theatre distanced itself from, and criticised, the perceived foreign control of cinema exhibition. The theatre responded to the Klan's criticisms of film morality, presenting itself as a censor and repeatedly promising 'clean pictures.' The Klan (and other moral reformers) had also expressed concerns about the cinema buildings themselves, as I showed in chapter two, as unsafe, morally unsound buildings. McConaughy rearticulated a space of darkness and moral sin as a light, clean area where 'seats are new and comfortable.' By August 1924, the theatre was clearly promoted as a morally safe space, populated by Klansmen, with an advert in the *Noblesville Daily Ledger* using the three Ks to describe The American as 'Kool, Kozy and Klean.'¹⁵⁴

Noblesville was a strong area for the Klan and the *Ledger* appeared sympathetic to the cause, regularly publishing adverts and reports on large Klan parades. However, within a month of adopting its more virulently pro-Klan advertisements, the American Theatre was closed. L. G. Heiny resigned as manager and Thompson, the owner who had been 'assisting Mr. Heiny in conducting the policy of the house,' was nowhere to be found. McConaughy had initially revealed the cinema's financial struggles in the previous November and, since Thompson had assumed control of the theatre, the situation had evidently not improved. *The Ledger* reported that 'it is understood that the theatre has not been a paying proposition for some time and this is said to have been the

reason it closed.' Thompson, who had arrived from Indianapolis earlier in the summer, subsequently admitted that financially he was not able to continue.¹⁵⁵

Over the next few weeks there were numerous attempts to reopen The American, until *The Ledger* reported in September that the Thompson family had taken over the theatre and assumed all 'obligations of [the] American Amusement Company.'¹⁵⁶ It is difficult to establish the level of Klan involvement within the American Amusement Company, but as the company was established with the specific purpose of creating a pro-Klan establishment, it is reasonable to suggest that local Klansmen were heavily involved in this company, and would have comprised a large number of the company's shareholders. The demise of the company, and of The American Theatre would appear to mark the end of this Klan enterprise. Although the theatre appeared to reopen as the Palace Theatre on 23rd September, it distanced itself from The American, only briefly mentioning in a very small advert that this was 'previous American.' The Palace did promote a forthcoming screening of *Birth* in its very first advert, but the theatre did not adopt the aggressive and blatantly pro-Klan policy of The American. The Klan was not emphasised in adverts at all, and *Birth* was described as the 'greatest historical play ever produced' without any direct mention of the Klan. By 1926 there is no listing in the city directory for 860 Logan Street, the home of The American Theatre, and it appears that this Klan project was ultimately a brief, but significant failure.¹⁵⁷

The Twentieth Century Motion Picture Company and the demise of the Klan film enterprise.

The ultimate failure of The American Theatre is symptomatic of broader failings in the Klan's dealings with film. In August 1924, just a few weeks before The American Theatre closed, Mifafa Pictures Co., the group responsible for *The Toll of Justice*, was placed in receivership.

In December 1923 the *Ohio State Journal* had suggested, rather optimistically (and as it turned out entirely inaccurately), that *The Toll of Justice* 'taken as a whole

augurs well for the success of the Miafa company,' The film was the only one produced by Miafa, but a report in *The Fiery Cross* in April 1924 had hailed the film a success, explaining that Ray Wareham, the Miafa manager, had decided to take the film on tour because of the 'many demands from other points.'¹⁵⁸ The film may have been in demand, but it was evidently not profitable. When *Toll* and Miafa were both placed in the hands of the receiver, attorney L. M. Graham, in August 1924, it was revealed that 'various persons employed in producing the picture have not been paid.' By the time *The Toll of Justice* was back in Columbus, playing at the Chamber of Commerce for three days in October 1924, reports indicated that 'the picture belongs to a corporation of Columbus Business men' and Miafa as a Klan production company was a certified failure.¹⁵⁹

The Cavalier Picture Company in Indiana does not appear to have fared much better. In an Indiana Supreme Court case against David Stephenson, the former head of the Klan in Indiana, it was revealed that Stephenson was the major shareholder in the company.¹⁶⁰ Stephenson's involvement in the company is significant not only in further highlighting Cavalier's Klan links, but also in suggesting an important division between Miafa's officially endorsed *The Toll of Justice* and Cavalier's *The Traitor Within*. Stephenson was the head of the hugely powerful Klan in Indiana and, after helping Hiram Evans to assume power from the organisation's founder William Simmons at the end of 1922, he was handed control of a further twenty-two states. However, by 1924, divisions between Stephenson and Evans, the two powerhouses of the expanding Klan, were threatening to pull the Klan apart, and in May 1924, Stephenson sought to remove the Klans of Indiana from the national organ. There followed a series of increasingly hostile disputes and lawsuits as Stephenson, seeking greater control and financial rewards, became further removed from the established Klan. These two Klan film companies thus appear to represent, at least in part, the different factions of the Klan. If Miafa's *The Toll of Justice* adopted the support of the established official Klan, *The Traitor Within* seems to be the product of the ambitious factions keen to exploit the Klan and develop the organisation themselves. There are clear differences between the companies, with Cavalier using Kleagles and Klan propagandists to run their company

in Indiana, while Miafa assumed the work of C. & S., a non-Klan company of established film experts in Ohio. Yet both companies ultimately failed, and the demise of the Klan as a film enterprise can certainly be linked to shifting social attitudes towards the Klan after 1924.¹⁶¹

William Lutholtz suggested that Cavalier was already defunct by the time of Stephenson's court case in 1925, but the negative publicity generated against the Klan during 1925 further undermined not only the social standing of the Klan but also, more specifically, the work of the entertainment bureaus in presenting the Klan to the public.¹⁶² *Variety* contained several reports during the summer of 1924 about the growing popularity of Klantauquas. In July, *Variety* reported on its front page, that 'the phenomenal success that has greeted the K.K.K. Klantauquas through Illinois, Iowa and Indiana has been instrumental in deciding the order to have a country-wide circuit for the 1925 season.' The piece explained that 'everything favors the Klantauquas' and 'opposition of this kind is going to be hard for the Chautauquas to combat.' Yet nine months later in April 1925, *Helena Daily Independent* reported that 'there will be no Klantauquas this season... the entire Klantauqua thing has been called off.' The paper explained that 'the chief trouble, the organisation reports, is the number of higher-up officials who have become involved in scandal.' These scandals not only undermined Klan support, but also often made the group retreat from a public platform, as it wished to avoid facing criticisms and answering questions regarding these scandals.¹⁶³

The end of Cavalier actually appears to have come before these scandals, but those involved in the company continued to embark on a series of short-lived film projects. Cavalier does not feature in the Indianapolis directory, but a share certificate does indicate that the company was still selling stock, with Charles Lewis Fowler as President and Oscar Haywood as treasurer, a year after its launch in May 1924. When Roscoe Carpenter, the original secretary of Cavalier, was called to testify at the trial of Stephenson in the Indiana Supreme Court in 1925, he explained that he was 'engaged in the motion picture business, being President of the Cavalier Motion Picture Company,' yet in 1924 Carpenter was listed in the City Directory 'with Hoosier Distributors inc.' Hoosier would appear to be an extension or even a successor to Cavalier, as the

company was responsible for distributing *The Traitor Within*. When Hoosier appeared in the 1925 Directory, it was still in the same building, but Curtis C. Hendren was now President and Frank G. Hous was general manager. Roscoe Carpenter was now listed as the President of The Twentieth Century Motion Picture Company of Indiana. The vice President was C. Lewis Fowler of New York, the former President of Cavalier.¹⁶⁴

An article in the *Indianapolis Star* in the summer of 1925 offered further information on the Twentieth Century Motion Picture Company, introducing another familiar figure at the head of the enterprise; 'E. Y. Clarke, formerly of Atlanta, Ga., who is credited with obtaining 3,000,000 members for the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in the United States is the guiding head of the Twentieth Century Enterprises.'¹⁶⁵ The article further explained that the company would offer 'motion picture training and scenario writing at \$16 a membership.' Although the enterprise was not affiliated with the Klan, Edward Young Clarke, who had been identified in the first failed attempt at a Klan film project four years earlier, continued to emphasise the pedagogical function of film. Clarke attempted to present film making as an 'educational course,' announcing his intention to set up three hundred clubs throughout the country. The establishment of this enterprise may also have recognised the earlier failings of the independent Klan companies. The Twentieth Century Motion Picture Company intended to produce 'ten master motion pictures' and Clarke suggested that by having three hundred 'centers of movie fan groups' already established throughout the country, the films would gain a sizeable following within 'first-run cities' and thus would be 'sure to be a tremendous money-maker.' He also emphasised the importance of serious training in order to produce high quality features and highlighted the large sums of money that needed to be invested in order to generate a profit from filmmaking.¹⁶⁶

Edward Young Clarke still evidently viewed the motion picture industry, like the Klan, as a commercially lucrative market. He announced plans to establish a Florida Land Development Company, which would acquire 225,000 acres of West Florida land on which to construct a \$5,000,000 studio. Clarke appeared to view The Twentieth Century Motion Picture Company as a commercial enterprise, comparable to the Klan, and he set out his ambitious, confrontational plans in 1925. He explained that 'I rocked

the nation with the reorganization of the Ku Klux Klan, and our enterprise will rock the motion picture world. We will be in direct competition with the biggest motion picture companies in the world.' Clarke presented his enterprise once more in direct opposition to the established film industry.¹⁶⁷

Clarke, like D.C. Stephenson, was a master of propaganda, but he used publicity and propaganda not simply to impress his ideals on a wider audience, but more specifically to commercially exploit the fears and dreams of the American public and to generate vast amounts of money. Clarke appeared to use the film company to boost his own bank balance and a series of suits subsequently alleged that he had 'misappropriated \$200,000 of the corporation funds.' A report in 1934, before Clarke's latest appearance in the Florida Federal Court, explained that Clarke had sold life memberships for \$500, promising profits of \$5000 in return.¹⁶⁸ For Clarke, like the other Klan enterprises before, film appeared as a commercially lucrative, pedagogical tool, as these Klan enterprises, like the Klan itself, were driven by a mix of high idealism and materialism. By 1925, Clarke's film company had already gone into receivership, but Clarke continued to look towards both modern media and fraternal orders, as he set up his own fundamentalist secret society, The Supreme Kingdom, which responded to the latest Protestant fear, Darwinism.

The man who launched The Supreme Kingdom in Atlanta in January 1926 was Roscoe Carpenter, earlier listed as the President of Twentieth Century Motion Picture Company, and a leading figure in both Cavalier and Hoosier Distributors. Carpenter was one of fourteen 'senators' that comprised The Supreme Kingdom's governing body, and was heavily involved in the planned establishment of a radio station for the group. Under the unlikely headline 'Secret Society plans to fight apes by radio,' the *Oakland Tribune* reported that Roscoe Carpenter had announced plans to spend \$500,000 on a radio station in order to 'carry to the world the fight against the Darwin Theory.' Clarke had brought modern publicity methods to the reactionary Klan, and he now claimed that on his new radio station 'there will be no jazz programs. We will broadcast the old hymns.'¹⁶⁹ Other Klan groups had used radio before this, with The Fort Worth Klan group no. 101, for example, presenting a regular Klan radio program in

1923, and the KFKB radio station in Kansas offering a 'clean and wholesome' program featuring Klan musicians during 1924. The dichotomy between the reactionary content and the modern method, so apparent in the Klan's film enterprises, was continued through Clarke and Carpenter's ambitious plans. Clarke and Carpenter recognised the value of publicity through modern media, and although Twentieth Century Motion Picture Company might not have been a commercial success, five years after his first film enterprise, Edward Young Clarke was still looking to the modern media to financially exploit the popular interest in reactionary fraternal orders.¹⁷⁰

After the initial failed attempts by Clarke and Wheeler to produce a Klan film in 1921, the Klan featured as the subject within local actualities. In 1923 Cavalier and Miafa, as Klan film companies, sought to position the 'reality' of actual Klan footage within a fictional narrative framework. By 1925, Clarke was looking once more to exploit the public fascination in film, by creating nationwide film clubs that, like the Klan, relied on public subscriptions. This enterprise again emphasised the educative role of film within society, and sought to create an established audience for the company's films within first run cities. Ultimately, like the Klan, the idealism of the operation was overshadowed by greedy commercialism, and according to the Marion County Grand Jury Court notes from August 1926, the company 'went broke and is now in receivership.' All of these Klan film enterprises must ultimately be recognised as commercial failures, but why were these Klan film companies largely unsuccessful?¹⁷¹

Explaining the failures: Micheaux and the Knights of Columbus

The problems encountered by Cavalier, Miafa and other short-lived Klan film companies can in part be credited to a lack of film and business expertise. Cavalier was comprised largely of Kleagles - lecturers, propagandists and publicity figures - who may have recognised the potential financial and propagandist benefits of film but who had little experience in the business itself. Corey Cook's company, which was not a Klan company as such, initially produced *The Toll of Justice*, but the project suffered from in fighting and a lack of organisation, as the local Klan group, ill-equipped in the business

of film, assumed responsibility. *The Ohio State Journal* recognised the failings in the filmmaking of *Toll*, while both companies, driven by a combination of idealism and greed, suffered from regular changes in personnel and shifts in intended productions.¹⁷² Ultimately, both of these companies, along with the other ventures that never materialised, appeared alien to the realities of the film industry.

The inability to operate with the established film industry was an inevitable failing of these independent Klan productions. The Klan, hugely critical of what it perceived as a foreign, morally corrupt industry, presented itself in direct opposition to the established industry. Both Cavalier and Miafa defined themselves against the industry and thus had to differentiate their films from those produced by established companies. This differentiation ensured that the Klan film companies ultimately had to operate outside of the industry. This was a particular problem in terms of exhibition and distribution, as the Klan was unable to work with the powerful Jewish owned theatres. In one town, the Klan complained that 'it is impossible to rent a hall on account of the influence of the Jews,' while opposition to the Klan prevented the group from hiring the municipal auditorium in Omaha when it wanted to promote itself in the state in 1924. On a national scale, the Klan's anti-industry, anti-Jewish policy made it impossible to position their films nationally within the leading cinemas.¹⁷³ *The Toll of Justice*, intended for at least 21 states, limped around from hall to school, while Cavalier, presenting itself as a company 'owned and controlled by Protestants,' was ultimately unable to operate within the established distribution and exhibition circles that it so condemned. Cavalier was thus forced to announce in 1924 that *The Traitor Within* 'will not be shown at movie houses.'¹⁷⁴

The failure of *The Toll of Justice* and *The Traitor Within* to extend beyond local, often non-theatrical, screenings is not simply the result of their Klan affiliations, but is also symptomatic of broader problems facing a number of independent productions, as the industry became an increasingly powerful oligopoly. As Stephen Ross has indicated, it was far more difficult for independent filmmakers after the War, as the cost of filmmaking escalated, and producers invested in fewer, bigger products. The control exercised by the main companies, in particular over production and distribution, made it

extremely difficult for an independent production to compete within this market, even if it wasn't confrontational towards the industry. Both Cavalier and Miafa initially aspired to position their films alongside leading mainstream features, but in finances and in professional expertise, their films could not challenge the professional star products on offer at the major theatres. The lack of distribution and established exhibition sites available to these films ultimately forced the producers to market them as specialist Klan pictures. Miafa's acting manager transported *The Toll of Justice* around the mid-West, while Hoosier Distributors advertised *The Traitor Within* in the Klan newspaper, *The Fiery Cross*. Increasingly in the 1920s, independent producers sought (or were forced) to take their film out of established theatres and to distribute and exhibit the films themselves. The Klan did this at schools and in churches, further positioning itself and its films as a moral, educative device. *Toll*, initially advertised not as a Klan picture and intended for a mass release, eventually emerged as a specialist Klan film, playing predominately to Klan audiences.

Alongside *Toll* and *The Traitor Within*, there was another slated Klan production in 1923. *Armageddon*, 'a motion picture which will depict the patriotic work of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,' was promoted in Florida in 1923 and, like *Toll* and *The Traitor Within*, was 'designed to counteract an anti-Klan picture;' in this case, Thomas Dixon's planned production, *The Traitor*. The film was intended as a 'stupendous spectacle dealing with the modern day Klan,' which would involve several thousand Klansmen. Once more the company behind the film attempted to position the film within the mainstream market, explaining that 'D.W. Griffith will be asked to direct it and motion picture stars of international fame will take the leading roles.' The film, seeking to emulate the success of *Birth*, attempted to compete with the industry, in seeking a renowned director and international stars. There is no evidence of this film ever being produced, and it is increasingly apparent that, while independent producers recognised the commercial potential of the Klan on screen, the realities of producing and distributing an independent Klan picture ensured that very few of these films ever even made it into a theatre.¹⁷⁵

Mark Dintenfass had recognised the reluctance of exhibitors to present the Klan on screen, when contacting exhibitors about his anti-Klan picture in 1921. Dintenfass noted the paradox facing all films depicting the Klan, as the subject was topical, exciting and commercially appealing, but it was also controversial, volatile and likely to face censorship.¹⁷⁶ *The Mysterious Eyes of the Ku Klux Klan* and *The Traitor Within* were both rejected from the popular Klan state of Ohio, while a film depicting the local Klan was banned in Chicago in 1922.¹⁷⁷ *The Traitor Within* provoked further confrontation amongst locals when shown in Decatur, highlighting that the Klan productions were not only problematic for censors because of the images produced on screen, but also for exhibitors, because of the agitation and extreme reaction that any topical depiction of the Klan might provoke.

The anti-Klan film *After Dark* was refused a license in New York in May 1923, and evidently the Klan's opponents faced similar problems to the Klan in their attempts to produce and exhibit films addressing the Klan. In 1922 Creston Feature Pictures, a New York based company that described itself on letterheads as 'Catholic Productions,' produced an anti-Klan picture entitled *A Knight of the Eucharist*. Creston advertised itself as 'a great Catholic enterprise' which set out to combat 'forces of evil which aim to destroy our religious liberties.' Amongst these 'forces of evil' were the Klan and the *Knight of the Eucharist* suffered at the hands of the censors, to a large extent because it directly confronted the topical, controversial subject of the Klan (and presented the Klan in relation to religious targets). The film was rejected by the New York censors, who noted that 'accusations are made against the characters of members of the Ku Klux Klan and their children, in language that would necessarily be eliminated from screen.' Once more the subject was deemed too volatile for censors, who expressed concerns that 'under certain circumstances, and in certain localities, it might "incite to crime".' The film was rejected again a few months later with the censors advising that twenty-two subtitles should be eliminated. Lines spoken by the Klansmen, including 'You lie. You are a foreigner with a foreign religion and you shall pay the penalty,' 'It is up to us to do something before the Jews and Catholics run the earth,' and 'I hate you like hell – and all your filthy crew. You are worse than the cursed Jews' were all eliminated. Six

scenes were also cut but, despite these suggestions, the film was rejected once more in November 1923 when Hopp Hadley presented it as *The Mask of the Ku Klux Klan*. The censors explained that 'the entire subject is such that it would arouse antagonism against a certain class of people.'¹⁷⁸

The problems faced by the Klan's opponents suggest that it was the Klan as a subject, rather than the Klan's ideological position, that was problematic for censors and exhibitors during the 1920s. Charlene Regester suggested that the New York commission's 'principal cause' for rejecting Oscar Micheaux's 1924 film, *A Son of Satan*, might have been the film's 'uncomplimentary portrayal of the Ku Klux Klan.' The commission objected to the scenes of 'masked men becoming intoxicated' and the 'killing of the leader of the hooded organization,' but, as the censorship of the Klan's own films indicate, censors were wary of any film addressing the modern Klan, whether the portrayal was uncomplimentary or not. Micheaux had sought to confront the modern Klan four years earlier in his 1920 film *The Symbol of the Unconquered*, with a poster exclaiming 'See The KKK in action and their annihilation.' *The Symbol of the Unconquered*, like the subsequent Klan-made films, sought to attract spectators and arouse commercial interest by drawing attention to the Klan. It once more directly associated itself with the controversy surrounding *Birth*, as a poster in Baltimore featured a Klansman on horseback in an image intentionally reminiscent of the *Birth* poster. Micheaux's attempts to aggressively respond to *Birth*, the modern Klan, and also to broader racial issues, ensured that his films were widely contested and censored.¹⁷⁹

A closer examination of the anti-Klan films produced during this period does suggest that producers attempted to use film as a medium to actively debate the merits of the modern Klan. Both *Toll* and *The Traitor Within* positively addressed the issue of Klan misrepresentation, while Micheaux directly challenged Griffith's depiction of the Klan in *Birth* in his 1920 film *The Symbol of the Unconquered*. The Knights of Columbus explored the violent actions of the modern Klan on the Catholic Church and its innocent members in *The Knight of the Eucharist*, and all of these films presented themselves defensively as a response to what each group perceived as a misrepresentation of the Klan on film. *Toll* was intended to counteract 'poisonous

propaganda,' and Cavalier intended to produce pictures 'which would counteract the influence of certain productions which had been found objectionable to the Klan.'¹⁸⁰ Even the unmade *Armageddon* was intended as a response to Dixon's own unmade *The Traitor*! These films all sought to propagandise and to influence debates on the Klan, but by the 1920s, these independent presentations appeared less capable of extending their influence beyond their existing supporters. Stephen Ross, writing about the labour films produced before the War, presented the movies and mass culture as an 'arena of struggle.' He suggested that 'groups outside the industry recognized the power of this new medium and turned out polemical films that addressed national debates over the domestic values and future direction of American society.'¹⁸¹ This was certainly an intention of these films (the Klan also saw this as a commercial venture). However, the restrictions on distribution and exhibition ensured that these films were no longer active players in debates but rather largely isolated polemics, reinforcing the established ideological positions of its audiences.

These films largely failed to extend beyond their own audience. Oscar Micheaux initially presented his films exclusively to African American theatres and positively emphasised in advertising materials that his first film, *The Homesteader*, 'cannot be booked through regular exchanges on the usual basis.' Micheaux often traveled with his films, drumming up interest on lengthy tours, and targeting his own specialist audience, comprised exclusively of African Americans.¹⁸² *Toll* and *The Traitor Within* attempted to appeal to children and ministers, but the films played predominantly to Klansmen in areas with a strong established Klan following. *The Knight of The Eucharist* ultimately played to specialist Catholic audiences in non-theatrical venues, appearing, for example, on a Sunday afternoon and evening in March 1923 at the auditorium of the Sacred Heart cathedral school in Iowa.¹⁸³

Conclusion

The restrictions that the Klan faced in producing, distributing and exhibiting its films would appear to be shared by its opponents. The experiences of the Knights of

Columbus within film during the 1920s thus closely mirrored those of the Klan. The Knights of Columbus strongly opposed immoral productions, later forming the influential Legion of Decency and campaigned against films that it felt ridiculed the Catholic faith.¹⁸⁴ The Knights of Columbus, like the Klan and Oscar Micheaux, operated outside of an industry that it was largely critical of, and distributed and exhibited its films much like the Klan. The group, like the Klan, not only sought greater control of its own representation by establishing a film company, but also sought to exercise greater influence over film exhibition. Catholic newspapers advertised theatres or films, sympathetic to the group, with *The Catholic Columbian*, for example, containing an advert for *Abie's Irish Rose* at the Lyceum in 1923, and *The Indiana Catholic* regularly advertising the Schubert-Murat theatre, which put on *The Heart of Paddy Whack* for the 'Knights of Columbus Theatre Party' in January 1924.¹⁸⁵ The Knights of Columbus also arranged its own outdoor screenings, presenting 'the great Americanization film' *The Man Without a Country* at Fairview Park in August 1923.¹⁸⁶

The Klan was not an anomaly of the twenties, but was rather a defining feature of the period, and similarly the Klan's experiences with film production and exhibition are a part of a broader conservative response to the perceived failings of the film industry. The Klan is integral to post-War discourses concerning American racial and religious identity, and the Klan can similarly be positioned within the context of a larger group of independent producers seeking to promote Americanism on screen. The American Legion ran the 'American Legion film service,' which it had established in 1921 under the leadership of James E. Darst, a publicity expert.¹⁸⁷ The film service provided projection machines and films to Legion posts throughout the country, but its motives were very similar to the Klan's. An article in 1924 explained that 'Two years ago the American Legion began a campaign for cleaner and more truly American films.' Earle A. Meyer, the head of the service, criticised producers for making pictures that would appeal to the "'thirteen year old" intelligence of the average motion picture audience' and spoke disparagingly of the continued presence on film of 'flappers, custard pies and triangles.'¹⁸⁸

The Legion, like the Klan and the Knights of Columbus supported and responded to the popular criticisms about the industry, and produced pictures that it described as 'educational, historical and entertaining.' According to a report in Wyoming, the Legion exhibited these films in theatres 'under the auspices of the 11,000 local legion posts' but, for the most part, the film service appeared more active in distribution than production.¹⁸⁹ The Legion bought the exclusive distribution and exhibition rights to the War film, *The Man Without a Country*, and local Legion groups regularly arranged screenings.¹⁹⁰ The Charles A. Parsons post of the American Legion presented *The Flashing Action*, an official picture produced by the War Department, at Wilsonville in 1923, while the Edwardsville Post and Davenport Post American Legion were among a large number of groups that showed *The Whipping Boss* in local theatres during 1924 and 1925.¹⁹¹ The National Commander of the Legion, John R. Quinn, who helped secure the exclusive distribution rights for *The Whipping Boss*, explained that the film's 'exhibition offers the Legion priceless publicity.'¹⁹² For the Legion, like the Klan, film exhibition also helped the group to bolster its own role and identity within the local community. For example, a local presentation for *The Whipping Boss* within Ohio was widely publicised as being 'for the benefit of the Mansfield High School band.'¹⁹³

I suggested in chapter two the broad currency of the Klan's film criticisms, with conservative groups, such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy and The Daughters of the American Revolution, both actively supporting the Board of Review's 'better films' campaign and establishing their own film programs. The Daughters of the American Revolution, who protested strongly in 1923 against companies that wished to distribute Fatty Arbuckle pictures, also organised its own film screenings.¹⁹⁴ Reports and posters for Griffith's *America* suggested that he had made the film 'for the Daughters of the American Revolution.'¹⁹⁵ Film scholars, magnetised towards the increasingly powerful industry, have often overlooked this hugely important stream of non-theatrical, Americanism films. Scholars have prioritised the film industry and theatrical exhibition, and I myself have suggested that these Klan films were effectively forced to exhibit in non-theatrical venues, but non-theatrical exhibition was massively popular within the local communities in which the Klan flourished.

The Klan's ambitions within film certainly appeared closely linked to these other religious and conservative groups. All recognised the power of film both as an educative device capable of spreading their values throughout the country and as a recruiting tool. Ultimately for the Klan and the Knights of Columbus, the difficulties in securing widespread distribution and exhibition within established sites may have restricted this ideal on a national level. Yet both groups still managed to re-enforce their role within local communities and define themselves through film exhibition. The Klan presented itself publicly through its advertisements of films and of local theatres, as American, as Protestant and as morally clean. Local Klan groups managed to position themselves as religious, educative groups by presenting their films in schools and churches, while the promotion of specific Klan theatres, like the American Theatre in Noblesville, allowed the group to strengthen its position within the community further and to publicise its values and ideals to a broader public.

On film, the Klan emphasised its moral role, and challenged the misrepresentation of the Klan by its enemies. The films suggest either a paranoid anxiety by the Klan, or reveal a clever defensive response by the group to the oft-reported violent actions of Klansmen. The representation within these films again prioritises the mystery surrounding the Klan, looking to commercially exploit the interest around the group and to defensively counteract popular criticisms of the Klan, by offering to reveal the 'truth' behind the group. Despite the Klan's criticism of the film industry, its films share much in common with those discussed in the previous chapter. *Toll* could almost be viewed as a remake of *Heart O' the Hills*. The close parallels suggest that the Klan companies were looking initially to compete within this established market, but also that the industry presentations were often sympathetic to the Klan. The films differ however in the Klan's insistence upon reality, and in their attitudes towards modern life (and in particular in *Toll*, to the modern woman). The Klan-made films also emphasised their Klan links and directly targeted Klansmen, with their advertising and marketing strategies different from those promoting films within the industry like *Heart O' The Hills* and *One Clear Call*.

The Klan was at its most active in film during the early 1920s. After initially exploiting both *Birth* and *The Face at Your Window*, Klan groups looked to produce and exhibit their own films. This was undoubtedly viewed, in part at least, like all Klan ventures, as a commercial business opportunity, but the Klan continued to exploit more mainstream films that it felt could promote the values of the Klan. *The Fifth Horseman* was advertised as a Klan feature within the Klan press, and benefited the local Klan when it showed at the Community Hall in Sugarcreek and at the Lincoln Square Theatre in Indianapolis.¹⁹⁶ Individual mainstream films, like *Janice Meredith* (1924), a Marion Davies film set during the American Revolution, also received hearty praise from the Klan in 1924. *The Protestant Home Journal* urged Klansmen to go and see this 'real movie triumph,' writing 'if any American is still in doubt as to what his attitude toward the Ku Klux Klan should be, this doubt may be forever removed by witnessing this most impressive deject lesson.'¹⁹⁷

The Klan presented itself as a moral guardian and as an educator. It criticised the film industry on account of its perceived ethnicity, but continued to use and exploit film throughout this period. For the industry, the Klan was an exciting taboo, exploited locally by exhibitors but carefully monitored by producers. The Klan, however, recognised the value of film for propaganda and recruitment, as an educative device, and as a medium through which the Klan could define itself both locally and on a national level. This could be done not only through representing the Klan on film, but also through its attacks on the immoral 'Jewish' film industry, and through the manner in which it advertised and promoted film to the public. The Klan was one of many conservative groups producing and supporting independent, Americanism films within local communities. Although these films were reliant on an established Klan audience, the Klan film shows were events that provoked discussion and publicity throughout the community. Ultimately by differentiating its films and theatres from the established industry, the Klan was unable to sustain a productive and viable commercial film enterprise. However, Klan groups and opportunistic Klan leaders continued to recognise the commercial and ideological potential of film, with Klan groups attempting to engage with film even after the group's fortunes began to crumble after 1925.

¹ 'Klux Closes Deal for \$400,000 Film to Advertise Klan', *New York World* (25/9/21), 2.

² 'Four Grand Goblins of Klan Discharged', *Wichita Daily Times* (2/12/21), 6. According to the *New York World*, Arthur Bate also sent a telegram to Colonel Simmons in September 1921 calling on him to dismiss Edward Young Clarke.

³ 'King Kleagle Now Absent from State', *The Hartford Courant* (11/9/21), 4:1. The holder of this box had opened Wheeler's letters and dropped them in the mail chute with the label 'Ku Klux Klan mail not for this box.' The article added that 'Wheeler left New Haven immediately after this episode' offering no forwarding address.

⁴ 'King Kleagle to Boost KKK Drive Here', *New Haven Register* (23/9/21), 1.

⁵ Wheeler eventually moved to Hollywood where he met the actress and society girl Nancy (also known as Ann) Hellman, who he married in December 1927. They divorced in January 1929 with Ann Wheeler claiming that Clifford Wheeler found his wife 'excess baggage' in Hollywood. In all reports Wheeler is referred to as a 'movie director', and he wrote and directed *The Love Wager* for Platinum Pictures in 1927. As Cliff Wheeler, he directed at least another six films within the next two years, at least three of which were for Excellent Productions. See *Oakland Tribune* (29/12/27) Home Edition p.1, and *Oakland Tribune* (19/1/29), 23.

⁶ 'No Great Demand for "Ku Klux" Film: Queried Exhibitors Return Refusals- Afraid of Censorship and Agitation', *Variety* (14/10/21), 47. A critical stage play written by C. Anderson Wright, a former Grand Goblin and leading figure in the World exposé was produced at the end of 1921 under the title *Behind the Mask*.

⁷ While Mark Dintenfass was attempting to generate interest in his anti-Klan picture, he was also trying to exploit Jack Johnson 'in a comedy showing certain adventures of the colored ex-champion in Europe.' *Lincoln State Journal* (14/8/21), B.5. Dintenfass is best known for helping to finance and produce Warner Bros' first major studio hit, *My Four Years in Germany* in 1918. For more information on Dintenfass, see Richard Alan Nelson, *Florida and the American Motion Picture Industry 1898-1980* (Garland Publishing inc.: New York and London, 1983), 537-540, 558.

⁸ 'Anti-Ku Klux Picture Finds No Demand', *Searchlight* (24/2/22), 1.

⁹ *The Hooded Mob* appears to have been renamed *After Dark*, when it applied for a New York State license in May 1923. According to the licence record, the film featured a 'law abiding, prosperous citizen of a community, [who] for no reason that the story shows is persecuted by an organization of men wearing hoods and masks.' The law-abiding citizen is abducted and beaten by the hooded men for no reason, other 'than that he is of another faith.' Despite an ending, revealing 'all of the foregoing to have been a dream', the film struggled for a release and faced censorship, to a large extent it would seem because it was extremely violent and contained characters of 'three distinct and different faiths.'

¹⁰ 'See The Ku Klux Klan at the Marlowe', *Englewood Times* (9/9/21), 5,7. As with most of the independent productions depicting the Klan, adverts positively emphasised the mystery surrounding the group. The film offered to show 'the latest of the mysterious actions of this mysterious organisation.' The article implied that the Klan featured within *The White Riders*, but I have found no other references to this film. A picture entitled *The White Rider* showing Klan activities did play in Lincoln Nebraska in 1925. Above *The White Rider* on the bill was Geden's Rabbit circus, advertised as 'educated rabbits that have human minds.'

¹¹ 'Movies to Show Acts of the Ku Klux Klan', *Searchlight* (8/4/22), 2. The article explained that 'the picture will comprise three reels, showing the original initiation of the body and portraying the Klan's activities and ideals.' The film was due to be released 'about Thursday of next week.'

¹² *The Oklahoman* (26/3/22), 22. The small advert appeared on the last day of the film's run, with a note adding that it was 'playing in regular houses.'

¹³ *Wichita Daily Times* (30/5/22). The film appeared with 'a good two reel comedy', *The Monkey School Master*.

¹⁴ *The Mysterious Eyes of the Ku Klux Klan* may not have been a 'Klan film' as such, but it was adopted by Klan groups, and it is reasonable to assume that the producer Bernard McComb, would not have been given access to the 'inner workings of the Klan' for three months if he was not a Klansman, who was producing a film sympathetic to the group. *Modesto Evening News* (15/8/22), 12, (14/8/22), 3. William J. Voss, who bought the rights to show the picture in

Modesto claimed that he paid 'a price greater than any ever paid for a single reel by any Modesto theatre', which once more shows the commercial appeal of the Klan. See *Decatur Daily Review* (19/8/22), 5. *Decatur Review* (21/8/22), 9. *Indianapolis Star* (24/9/22), 60. The short report appeared in *Indianapolis Star* (26/9/22), 4.

¹⁵ *The News Sentinel* advertised *The Mysterious Eyes of the Ku Klux Klan* for a few days before the film's week-long engagement at the Lyric, with small boxes on a number of pages saying 'Look out for the Mysterious Eyes of the Ku Klux Klan' (20/10/22). In the Lyric's listings for the week, the film was advertised as 'Ku Klux Klan picture' (21/10/22) but the large adverts, called the film 'The Inside Story of the Ku Klux Klan.' See 24/10/22, 19 and 27/10/22, 25. An advert for the final showing of the film also appeared in the *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette* (28/10/22). The Lyric was described as 'Fort Wayne's Popular Family Theater.'

¹⁶ *The News Sentinel* (24/10/22), 19.

¹⁷ *Port Arthur Daily News* (28/8/22), 2.

¹⁸ 'Crowds at the Lyric', *The News-Sentinel* (25/10/22), 17. The poster offered to show the Klan 'from an unbiased standpoint', but the film was seemingly embraced by the local Klan group.

¹⁹ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (4/11/22), 3. A similar advert appeared in *Indianapolis Star* (24/9/22).

²⁰ 'Ku Klux Klan Movie Monday Night', *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (4/11/22), 1.

²¹ Ohio Division of Film Censorship Records held at Ohio Historical Society. *The Mysterious Eyes of the KKK* (certificate no. 2666) was submitted by A. B. Seymour of Houston, Texas in Cincinnati on 26/12/22, as a three-reel film, with the maker listed as D.S. Prod. The film was 'reconstructed reviewed and approved' on 27/2/23.

²² 'Klan Pictures at City Auditorium', *Lincoln Sunday Star* (6/12/25), 6. The film was described as 'the Klan moving picture' and as 'a new photoplay'. However, from the publicity materials, it is apparent that this is a reworking of *The Mysterious Eyes Of The Ku Klux Klan*. Adverts also appeared on 7/12/25 and 8/12/25.

²³ 'Klan Picture is Burned by Police', *Searchlight* (12/8/22), 1.

²⁴ 'Moving Pictures of Ku Klux Parade', *Fiery Cross* (7/9/23), 5.

²⁵ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (15/10/23), 3. The advert added 'Hundreds turned away Friday and Saturday. You will want to see it again and again.'

²⁶ 'The Ku Klux Klan Makes a Movie', *Movie Weekly* (6/10/23), 4-5, 29. Kelly bravely claimed for example that 'Movie Weekly has received from a reliable source that *The Toll of Justice* is built upon a patriotic theme.' In the previous issue (29/9/23), the magazine included a picture of the Klan and an outline of next week's article under the heading 'They've done it.'

²⁷ 'Picture Based on the Ku Klux Klan will Soon be Shown in Ohio Houses', *Moving Picture World* (22/9/23), 324. *Columbus Dispatch* (22/11/23), 25. The Florida Feature Film Company produced a picture with Walter Miller and Irva Ross entitled *The Toll of Justice* in 1916 which, contrary to a few erroneous reports, did not feature the Klan and bore no relation to the later film. See *Moving Picture World* (30/9/16), 2102.

²⁸ *Columbus Dispatch* (22/11/23), 25. *Moving Picture World* (22/9/23), 324.

²⁹ *The Chronicle-Telegram* (23/3/25), 2. *Fiery Cross* (14/12/23).

³⁰ 'Klan Film a Fizzle', *Moving Picture World* (1/12/23), 458.

³¹ *Moving Picture World* (22/9/23), 324.

³² *Newark Advocate* (17/12/23). The advert appears on p. 5 and the report on p.13.

³³ *Moving Picture World* (1/12/23), 458. *Ohio State Journal* (10/12/23), 5:12.

³⁴ *Moving Picture World* (1/12/23), 458. *Fiery Cross* (14/12/23), 1.

³⁵ 'Friends of Klan Aspire to Screen', *New York World* (14/4/23), 9. The article explained that Ricord Gradwell, 'owner of Producers Security Corporation' had a contract to market the films if he approved of them. See also *Film Daily* (16/4/23), 1. Cavalier is listed under 'New Incorporations' in *The New York Times* (8/3/23) and (19/4/23).

³⁶ Thomas G. Dyer, 'The Klan on Campus: C. Lewis Fowler and Lanier University', *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 77, (Fall 1978), 453-469. The quote is on p.469.

³⁷ *Mooreville Times* (20/7/23), 1. *Plainfield Messenger* (19/8/23), 1/5, discussed this second ceremony at length, but focussed on the excellent work administered by those directing traffic. It explained that there were very few accidents during the day; 'During the ceremonial a woman fainted and when being rushed to the emergency hospital in an automobile, the car plunged

down a ravine and collided with a tree, resulting in one woman suffering a broken arm and the other occupants being somewhat cut and bruised.'

³⁸ 'Speaker Defines Klan in Address', *Kokomo Daily Dispatch* (11/8/23), 1.

³⁹ *Kokomo Daily Dispatch* (11/8/23), 12. 'Dr. Haywood, K.K.K. Lecturer Talks to 350 in Local Church', *Middleton Daily Herald* (30/1/24), 1.

⁴⁰ *Fiery Cross* (10/8/23), 12. *Kokomo Daily Dispatch* (26/7/23), 1-2.

⁴¹ *Film Daily* (16/4/23), 1. *New York World* (14/4/23), 9.

⁴² The film was to be based on materials gathered from John Garrett, a young boy who was present when Wilkes Booth was captured, and who subsequently became a personal friend of Oscar Haywood's.

⁴³ *Anderson Daily Bulletin* (9/1/24), 8. *Winchester Journal Herald* (7/2/24), 4. *Fiery Cross* (14/12/23), 1.

⁴⁴ A version of *The Toll of Justice* is available at the University of North Carolina.

⁴⁵ Exposés of the Klan, like those carried out by the *New York World* in 1921, suggested that if you peel away the mystery surrounding the Klan, you uncover a corrupt, violent group, but the Klan suggests that uncovering the Klan reveals a positive, moral force.

⁴⁶ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (17/1/24), 2. *Fiery Cross* (14/3/24), 7.

⁴⁷ *Movie Weekly* (6/10/23), 4.

⁴⁸ *Chicago Daily Journal* (2/1/23), 23. *Chicago Evening Post* (4/1/23). These reviews were collected and accessed at the Billy Rose Theatre Collection in New York. The advert appeared in *Searchlight*, and the play was heavily advertised and discussed in *Dawn* (6/1/23), 2.

⁴⁹ The extremely dismissive review in the *Chicago Evening Post* (4/1/23) explained that the enemy thus 'stands not only for the menace of Japanese Imperialism but also for the threat of Russian Bolshevism.'

⁵⁰ *Ohio State Journal* (10/12/23), 5:12.

⁵¹ *Fiery Cross* (8/3/24), 1. Klan newspapers regularly contained articles discussing the 'proper use of bunting' or 'the salute to the flag.' See for example *Kourier* (7/25). The film's approval by the censors was reported in *Ohio State Journal* (23/11/23), 2, *Columbus Dispatch* (22/11/23), 25, and *Chronicle-Telegram* (23/11/23). *The Toll of Justice* was submitted to the Ohio Film Censorship board as a seven-reel film by C. and S. Pictures and was viewed on four occasions between 20/11/23 (card 3744) and 24/2/25. It was passed without eliminations.

⁵² *Muncie Sunday Star* (17/2/24), 7.

⁵³ *Columbus Dispatch* (22/11/23), 25. *The Traitor Within* (certificate 116) was submitted by Hoosier Distributors of Indianapolis and was rejected on 14/4/24 'on account of being harmful.' The censor was V. M. Riegel, but the Ohio Censorship records offer little further information on the film.

⁵⁴ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (24/4/24), 6.

⁵⁵ Joan Silverman, 'The Birth of a Nation: Prohibition Propaganda' from *The South and Film*, edited by Warren French (University Press of Mississippi, 1981), 29. Silverman suggests that although Griffith created 12 pro-temperance one and two reel films, it was Thomas Dixon who linked drink to the issue of race.

⁵⁶ Shelley Stamp noted that 'virtually all early serial heroines are cut adrift from conventional family relationships.' She further noted that the films often begin with a parent's death as this film does. Shelley Stamp, 'An Awful Struggle Between Love and Ambition: Serial Heroines, Serial Stars and their Female Fans', from *The Silent Cinema Reader*, edited by Lee Grieveson and Peter Kramer (Routledge, 2004), 212.

⁵⁷ Adverts for *Toll* emphasised 'a dash to death in an automobile' and 'an airplane battle in mid air.' See *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (24/4/24), 6 (Fig.7). Aviation was a popular theme within serials during this period, and again *Toll* appears to exploit the popular trends within mainstream cinema. In *Heart O' The Hills* (1919), Mary Pickford's character Mavie, is almost run over by a train in a sequence that serves only to highlight the dangers of technology, while in *Big Stakes* (1922), the heroine is seen driving a car, a sign of her modern independence, shortly before her capture.

⁵⁸ Kathleen M. Blee, 'Women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan movement', *Feminist Studies Vol. 17, No. 1* (Spring, 1991), 60. In *Women of the Klan* (University of California Press, 1991, p.164) Blee suggests that 'the Klan even produced their own movie using local Klanswomen as

actresses.' This is presumably referring to *The Traitor Within*, but although her reference (*Fiery Cross*, 23/8/24) includes a poster for the film, there is no mention of the Klan actresses.

⁵⁹ *Kluxer* (5/1/24), 29. *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (24/4/24), 6. *Ashland Times Gazette* (19/2/24), 12. *Newark Advocate* (17/12/23), 5. *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (15/1/24), 3.

⁶⁰ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (24/4/24), 6. *Daily Northwestern* (17/7/24), 3.

⁶¹ *New York World* (25/9/21), 2. *Lincoln Sunday Star* (6/12/25), 6. *Variety* (14/10/21), 47. Thomas Cripps acknowledged that 'From time to time the Klan capitalised on the publicity [from *The Birth of a Nation*] by announcing the production of a new film that would outdo Griffith.' Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900-1942* (Oxford University Press, 1977), 67.

⁶² *Ohio State Journal* (21/10/24), 8. *Columbus Dispatch* (3/1/24), 32.

⁶³ *Columbus Dispatch* (2/1/24), 23. *Ashland Times-Gazette* (20/2/24), 12.

⁶⁴ *Newark Advocate* (17/12/23), 5. *Fiery Cross* (14/3/24). *Fiery Cross* (25/1/24), 1

⁶⁵ 'Klan Principles Depicted in Play at Salina, Kansas', *Searchlight* (24/3/23), 6. *Searchlight* (19/5/23), 4.

⁶⁶ *Behind the Mask* opened at the Wieting theatre in Syracuse over Christmas 1921. See *Syracuse Herald* (25/12/21), and 'Ku Klux Klan Grand Goblin Tells Story', *Syracuse Herald* (17/12/21), 6. In January 1923 the Catholic Knights of Columbus Choral society put on *Ermine* at the Wieting, with a large poster explaining that this was 'under the auspices of the Knights of Columbus'. See *Syracuse Herald* (23/1/23), 10. The advert from the Park Theatre in Connecticut appeared in *Bridgeport Telegram* (12/7/22), 4.

⁶⁷ *Imperial Night-Hawk* (4/7/23), 8. *Searchlight* (19/5/23), 4. *Fiery Cross* (9/11/23), 1. The play was written and originally produced in Pittsburg, Kansas and when a further production was planned there in November 1923, *The Fiery Cross* explained that the cast comprised of 'a strong company of Klansmen and women.' The play also appeared in Lincoln in 1925, advertised as the 'only Ku Klux Klan show appearing on the American Stage. IT'S DIFFERENT.' *Lincoln Star* (10/9/25), 10.

⁶⁸ *Columbus Dispatch* (10/12/23), 10. For example when *The Toll of Justice* played in Charleston in September 1924, adverts in the *Charleston Gazette* directly targeted the Klansmen, writing 'Notice, K.K.K. "The Toll of Justice" will be shown at the Reel Theatre.' See *Charleston Gazette* (21/9/24), 4. The advert appeared again on the following day.

⁶⁹ *Newark Advocate* (17/12/23), 5. *Kluxer* (5/1/24), 29.

⁷⁰ *Fiery Cross* (14/3/24). Two separate large adverts appeared in the *Fiery Cross* for this screening. *Protestant Home Journal* (4/3/25), 1. The film was promoted in *Fiery Cross* (23/1/25, p.7) as 'a picture that every American should see.'

⁷¹ *Muncie Evening Press* (16/2/24), 7. *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (15/1/24), 3. *Greencastle Herald* (13/2/24), 5. *Anderson Daily Bulletin* (9/1/24), 8.

⁷² *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (24/4/24), 6. *Lincoln Sunday Star* (6/12/25), 6.

⁷³ *Columbus Dispatch* (2/1/24), 23.

⁷⁴ *Mansfield News* (20/2/24), 11. *Ashland Times-Gazette* (20/2/24), 12.

⁷⁵ There are of course important exceptions. For example, *Human Wreckage* released in 1923 by Mrs Wallace Reid was positively promoted as a warning and exposé of drug addiction. Walter Lipmann's *Public Opinion* released in 1922 was the most significant example of the growing interest in propaganda and political science as an academic subject.

⁷⁶ *Kluxer* (5/1/24), 29.

⁷⁷ 'Klan Members to March', *Columbus Dispatch* (5/1/24).

⁷⁸ 'Akron Juniors Give Good Play', *Youngstown Citizen* (19/3/25), 1. 'Akronites Witness Official Klan Film', *Ohio Fiery Cross* (8/3/24), 1. 'Picture Interests Greencastle Klan', *Fiery Cross* (29/2/24), 1. *Greencastle Herald* (13/2/24), 5.

⁷⁹ *Decatur Review* (17/7/24), 12.

⁸⁰ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (15/1/24), 3. *Fiery Cross* (2/5/24), 7. The advert for 'America's Greatest Klan Photoplay' appeared regularly within the paper and also in *Searchlight* (16/8/24), although a different address was now offered for Hoosier Distributors.

⁸¹ *Newark Advocate* (17/12/23), 5. *Ashland Times-Gazette* (19/2/24). *Lima News* (19/5/24), 2. *Chronicle-Telegram* (26/2/24, p.2) reported that the film was 'given at Ashland by the K.K.K.'

⁸² 'Klansmen are Aid to Children in Enid', *Searchlight* (14/1/22). The manager, Mr. Barr provided a five-reel show consisting of 'Harold Lloyd, Aesop's Fables, Adventures of Bill and Bob, One Reel Western and Pathé News.'

⁸³ Mr. Showalter appears to be Homer T. Showalter, who later became Mayor in Wabash, Indiana. An oral record of Showalter from Wabash Carnegie Public library briefly mentions his role within the Klan. Showalter says 'I personally, never was active in it' yet he was a member and 'practically all my friends belonged.' In 1923 he went to Atlanta as a Klan delegate. His comments further highlight the broad acceptance and wide appeal of the Klan (and its values) within Indiana. Showalter added that 'I had always kidded my Catholic friends and so on about the power structure that they were building up in the country.'

⁸⁴ *Dawn* (2/2/24). *Decatur Daily Democrat* (18/1/24), 1. The return of the parts is reported in the paper the following day (19/1/24, p.1).

⁸⁵ *Dawn* (2/2/24). *Decatur Daily Democrat* (18/1/24), 1. 'Threat Note Says No More Klan Pictures', *Fiery Cross* (25/1/24), 1. *The Fiery Cross* suggested that the theft 'has created great excitement here which has rebounded greatly to the benefit of the Klan and as a result it is understood that a great influx of members had resulted.' The theft convinced many 'that an organization such as is the Klan is needed in American at this time.'

⁸⁶ *Searchlight* (1/11/24), 5.

⁸⁷ 'Ku Klux Klan Film to be Shown Here', *Chronicle Telegram* (3/3/25), 1-2.

⁸⁸ *Chronicle Telegram* (23/3/25), 2. *Chronicle-Telegram* (23/3/35), 4.

⁸⁹ *Mansfield News* (17/2/24), 4. *Mansfield News* (22/4/23), 3. *The Fifth Horseman* was shown at the Haskell High School Auditorium in Gardiner, Maine in 1925. *Daily Kennebec Journal* (6/4/25), 4.

⁹⁰ *Movie Weekly* (6/10/23), 5.

⁹¹ 'Special Showing of Film for School Children', *Muncie Morning Star* (22/2/24). *Ashland Times Gazette* (19/2/24), 12.

⁹² *Decatur Review* (17/7/24), 12. *Marion Daily Star* (5/2/24), 9.

⁹³ *Lincoln Sunday Star* (6/12/25), 6. *Lincoln Daily Star* (8/12/25), 6.

⁹⁴ *Fiery Cross* (2/3/24), 5.

⁹⁵ 'E. Howard Cadle on Klan Roll!', *Tolerance* (8/4/23), 3. 'Cadle Quits! Klan? No, Tabernacle!', *Tolerance* (6/5/23), 2. A month before the screening of *The Traitor Within*, the Imperial Wizard, Dr Hiram Evans had delivered a speech at the Tabernacle, in which he had widely condemned the Catholic influence within education. See *Indianapolis Star* (14/2/24), 12.

⁹⁶ *Indiana Catholic and Record* (21/3/24), 4. This comment was also reported in the anti-Klan *Indiana Citizens Post* (29/3/24), 1.

⁹⁷ *Indianapolis Star* (8/6/24), 10.

⁹⁸ *Fiery Cross* (21/3/24), 5. Next to a large advert for the film on page two was an article entitled 'Motion Picture Makers Fail to Grasp Chance in the Field of Education'. The article complained that 'there are too few historians, too few educators, too few men of vision in the motion picture game.' The Klan emphasised the educative role of film, but again stated that 'the business is in the hands of the wrong men', referring to the 'money-grabbing element.' *Tolerance* (8/4/23), 3.

⁹⁹ *Muncie Sunday Star* (17/2/24). *Muncie Morning Star* (19/2/24, p. 4), (21/2/24), (26/2/24, p.7). For adverts see *Muncie Morning Star* (16/2/24). The Tabernacle was due to be sold after the screening of *The Traitor Within*. *Muncie Evening Press* (18/2/24), 2.

¹⁰⁰ The Church Film Company provided titles such as *The Life of Christ* and *The Servant in the House* to a wide range of churches, including for example Rev. Metzger's Congregational Church in Vermont. A report on the company in 1921 suggested that 'many ministers will not approve of the idea, but it seems a sure-fire way for bringing lost sheep back into the fold. See *Bismarck Tribune* (20/9/21), 4. Church groups also wrote to The Board of Review, who supplied a pamphlet with films suitable for church exhibition.

¹⁰¹ *Ohio Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Records 1923-24*, at Ohio Historical Society. The advice for the entertainment bureau is very detailed, writing 'do not have artificial lights too close to the speaker's head, they draw insects and may spoil the speech.'

¹⁰² 'Klantaquas Indoors', *Variety* (6/8/24), 1.

¹⁰³ *Youngstown Citizen* (6/3/25). *Youngstown Citizen* (4/6/25).

¹⁰⁴ *Ohio Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Records 1923-24. Imperial Night-Hawk* (9/7/24), 4.

¹⁰⁵ See for example *Fiery Cross* (10/8/23, p.12), (5/10/23), (2/11/23). *Protestant Home Journal* (7/10/24), 2. 'Fort Worth Klavern Destroyed', *Imperial Night Hawk* (12/11/24).

¹⁰⁶ Mike Hudson, 'Visible Empire' from *Roanoke Times* (2/12/2001). The adverts are mentioned in this article.

¹⁰⁷ The figure is quoted in *Port Arthur News* (12/5/24), 3. The advert appeared on 16/6/24, 12. The Library of Congress holds photos of the production at Beaumont Texas. The play appeared in Roanoke in 1926 'under the auspices of the Robert E. Lee Klan, Realm of Virginia'.

¹⁰⁸ *Youngstown Citizen* (7/5/25), 3. *Frederick Daily News* (18/12/24), 14. The Shrine Patrol in Fort Wayne put on a 'series of ludicrously funny stunts' in 1921, under the title 'Ku Klux Klan'. It was billed as an 'exposé of the Ku Klux Klan.' See *Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette* (3/12/21).

¹⁰⁹ *Protestant Home Journal* (18/2/25), 1. A poster appeared on p.5. *Protestant Home Journal* (25/2/25), 8. *Youngstown Citizen* (26/2/25), 1. When *The Martyred Klansman* played at the Gettysburg Auditorium in July 1926, adverts again asked 'is the Klan Friend or Foe? See the answer in a great drama.' The play again offered a 'truth'. *Gettysburg Times* (22/7/26), 8. Information on *The Birth of a Klansman* appeared in *Protestant Home Journal* (25/2/25), 1.

¹¹⁰ *The Port Arthur News* wrote extensively about this play, reporting that the play was 'made up of Port Arthur Talent.' A number of lengthy articles appeared in 22/6/24, p.12. See also 17/6/24, p.5, 23/6/24, p.1, 'The Awakening Scores a Hit' (26/6/24, 1). The play also added a 'touch of the ever popular tuneful and comic black face minstrel worked into it.' Once more the racial sequence appeared largely removed from the Klan, appearing as a comic skit and as a brief plantation scene. See *Port Arthur News* (10/6/24). By 1926, publicity materials claimed that the play had 'already been seen by a quarter of a million people around the country.' Mike Hudson recorded first hand testimony from some of the locals involved in the play in Roanoke, and in all its appearances the play was presented as a local community event. Mike Hudson, 'Visible Empire' from *Roanoke Times* (2/12/2001).

¹¹¹ *Dawn* (6/1/23). *Chicago Daily Journal* (2/1/23), 23. *Chicago Evening Post* (4/1/23).

¹¹² Adverts within the play's programme were for established local companies with apparent Klan affiliations. The MacDonald-Kaitchuck Printing Company wrote in its advert that 'The Invisible Empire as an organisation is made up of the best brains, of the best race of people, in the best country of God's Footstool. Having Jesus Christ as their criterion of character, they are a power for good. Too bad it is not generally correctly understood. There is also an INVISIBLE POWER in good printing, which is not generally understood, but it gets the business. It delivers the goods.' The programme was accessed at the Billy Rose Theatre Collection in New York.

¹¹³ *Imperial Night-Hawk* (6/8/24), 6.

¹¹⁴ *Decatur Review* (19/3/22), 21. *Decatur Review* (22/3/22), 8. *Elwood Call Leader* (11/12/22), 6 and (13/12/22).

¹¹⁵ 'Super-Klan Film to Feature Meet.' *Searchlight* (21/6/24), 2. *Daily Northwestern* (17/7/24), 3. *The Traitor Within* even played at the Shelbyville Chautauqua in August 1924, which was not officially a Klan gathering. See *Decatur Review* (8/8/24), 4.

¹¹⁶ *Davenport Democrat and Leader* (14/9/25), 3.

¹¹⁷ 'The Best Motion Pictures on Americanism' and 'Letter from Mrs Livengood to The National Board of Censorship' (6/3/25) both contained in *The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures Records*, housed at the New York Public Library.

¹¹⁸ *Searchlight* (6/5/22), 6. 'Pilgrim Photoplay Exchange' from Fort Wayne Ku Klux Klan Records Box 1, Folder 6 at Indiana Historical Society.

¹¹⁹ The catalogue included a diverse set of titles ranging from 'Should I buy a tractor?' which promised to present 'the tractor question, pro and con' to 'Making a Ukelele'. 'Bureau of Visual Instruction- Indiana University Extension Division 1925-26', from Fort Wayne Ku Klux Klan Records Box 2, Folder 8 at Indiana Historical Society.

¹²⁰ 'Telegram from R. N. Lammott to Indiana University Visual Institution' (7/5/24). Films requested include 'Thomas J. Morgan'. From Fort Wayne Ku Klux Klan Records.

¹²¹ *Imperial Night-Hawk* (23/7/24), 5.

¹²² *Imperial Night-Hawk* (14/11/23), 6, (5/12/23), 5.

¹²³ *Youngstown Citizen* (16/10/24), 3. Adverts appeared regularly for films such as Mary Pickford in *Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall*. 'While Satan Sleeps', *Searchlight* (29/7/22), 5.

¹²⁴ *Searchlight* (4/11/22), 8. *Searchlight* (28/6/24, p.7), when discussing the differences between American and European pictures, suggested that 'neither has Europe sent us a picture that will compare with *Cosmopolitan's* greatest success, "When Knighthood was in Flower".'

¹²⁵ There was no mention of the Klan in any of the posters in the *Atlanta Constitution*. These instead focussed on Marion Davies, the large 25-piece orchestra and favourable quotes, including one from the Prince of Wales, who said 'It is wonderful' after viewing a 'command' showing in London.

¹²⁶ *Fiery Cross* (2/2/23) contains an advert for 'What's Wrong With the Women', a vaudeville show coming to the Classic. The adverts for the Classic appeared regularly, most notably through April 1923. *Elwood Call Leader* (13/12/22, 8/1/24 and 28/1/24). Both 'Pete Sullivan Entertainers' and 'Keith Entertainers' played at the Classic in the first quarter of 1924.

¹²⁷ *Elwood Call Leader* (31/1/24), (1/2/24). *Elwood Call Leader* (5/11/23, p.8), (23/9/22, p.6).

¹²⁸ *Indianapolis Star* (7/12/24), listed 'new management, new policy'.

¹²⁹ *Fiery Cross* (23/1/25), 7. *Fiery Cross* (30/1/25), 2.

¹³⁰ *Fiery Cross* (6/2/25), (13/2/25, p.1).

¹³¹ *Indiana Citizen's Post* (3/5/24), 1, 2. The theatre was located in Logansport Indiana. Kenneth Jackson reports that John Hamrick removed the '100%' from his adverts in 1924 'when the local Klan was less powerful.' Hamrick owned a number of theatres in the Northwest, including ones in Seattle and Tacoma. Kenneth Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (Oxford University Press, 1967), 200.

¹³² *Decatur Review* (18/8/22, p.7), (19/8/22, p. 5), (20/8/22, p.14), (21/8/22, p.9).

¹³³ 'Oglesby Observer, p.4' within *Decatur Review* (7/4/23), 3.

¹³⁴ *Decatur Review* (16/11/23), 21. *Decatur Review* (10/12/24). *Decatur Daily Democrat* (18/1/24), 1. *The Traitor Within* played in Decatur again in 1924 at the Jefferson Theatre. *Decatur Review* (17/7/24), 12.

¹³⁵ 'Letter from Mrs Livengood to The National Board of Censorship' (6/3/25) from *The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures Records*, at the New York Public Library.

¹³⁶ 'Ku Klux Klan Movie Monday Night', *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (4/11/22), 1. Advert on 4/11/22, 3. 'Hundreds Saw Ku Klux Klan Picture', *Noblesville Daily Ledger*, (7/11/22), 6.

¹³⁷ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (9/2/23), 8. The advert exclaimed 'Whoop! What a thrill when they come roaring down for vengeance!' A different advert appeared the next day, exclaiming 'thrill to new thrills when masked avengers ride!' See also 9/2/23, 3.

¹³⁸ *Indianapolis Star* (1/6/23), 4.

¹³⁹ 'New American Theatre will Open Next Tuesday', *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (24/6/23), 1. 'New Theatre will Open Tonight', *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (26/6/23), 1.

¹⁴⁰ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (30/6/23), 3. *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (5/9/23), 3, 7. When *Birth* played at the Princess Theatre in Plainfield, Indiana in 1923 it was described as 'a real 100% picture' and a 'great All-American picture.' *Plainfield Messenger* (6/12/23), 9.

¹⁴¹ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (13/8/23), 6, (14/8/23). Adverts for the film at the Opera House and The American appear regularly over the next two weeks.

¹⁴² *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (16/11/23), 6. *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (12/11/23), 3.

¹⁴³ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (16/11/23), 6. *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (18/1/23), 1. Small local theatres may place more emphasis on establishing a loyal audience, but McConaughy appears to promote the values of his theatre far more even than other independent managers.

¹⁴⁴ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (12/11/23, p.3), (28/11/23, p.3). *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (15/10/23, p.3), (14/10/23, p.3).

¹⁴⁵ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (14/1/24), (15/1/24, pp. 1 and 3), (16/1/24, p.6), (17/1/24, p. 2). The promise of 'thrills, happiness and facts' again highlights a fundamental difference between the films produced by the industry and those produced by the Klan. While both claim to offer thrills and happiness, the Klan states that its films offer facts and truth.

¹⁴⁶ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (24/4/24), 6, (26/4/24), 3.

¹⁴⁷ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (28/11/23), 3. A note from McConaughy on 12/11/23, p.3 explained that 'we promised you clean pictures and have proven it.'

¹⁴⁸ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (14/10/23), 3, (6/8/24), 3, (24/10/23), 3, (25/10/23), (12/11/23), 3.

¹⁴⁹ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (31/7/24), 4, (23/9/23), 6.

¹⁵⁰ 'American Theatre has New Manager', *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (2/7/24), 2. See also (30/1/24), 1.

¹⁵¹ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (18/8/24), 3.

¹⁵² *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (2/8/24), 3.

¹⁵³ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (6/8/24), 3.

¹⁵⁴ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (26/6/23), 1, *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (18/8/24), 3. When writing about the theatre in November 1923, McConaughy had claimed that 'The American theatre has the largest number of comfortable main floor seats in Hamilton County'. It has the 'only mechanical ventilating system in Hamilton County' and 'is the only theatre in Hamilton County that is properly heated.' In January 1924 adverts for The American explained 'Room- Warm- Comfortable- Cozy' and then at the height of summer, the theatre was described as the 'coolest spot in town', 'cool, cooler, coolest' and then as 'cool, cool, cool.' See *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (28/11/23), 3. (15/1/24, p.3), (31/7/24, p.4), (11/8/24), (12/8/24).

¹⁵⁵ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (26/8/24), 1. See also 12/11/23, 3.

¹⁵⁶ The theatre attempted to reopen a week after its last performance on 30 August. Again, adverts did not indicate what film would be showing, merely stating that there would be a 'wonderful production' and a 'continuous show.' In bold capital letters the adverts explained that this was 'Absolutely 100% and Absolutely Free.' The program was apparently attended by almost fifteen hundred people, but within three days a headline appeared announcing 'American Theatre Thing of the Past.' Three days later on 5 September, a further report announced 'American Theatre May reopen Soon.' The article explained that Thompson had met with other stockholders (all of whom were local figures) and explained that he expected the theatre's debts of around \$1000 to be cleared soon, allowing the theatre to reopen. *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (29/8/24, p.8), (2/9/24, p. 1), (5/9/24, p.1). *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (6/9/24), 1. The report explained that all equipment and property of the American Amusement Company had been handed over to the Thompsons who must cover all the debts and existing mortgages.

¹⁵⁷ *Noblesville Daily Ledger* (23/9/24).

¹⁵⁸ *Ohio State Journal* (10/12/23), 5:12. *Ohio Fiery Cross* (11/4/24), 5. The report explained that the film would be taken out of Ohio on tour from 15 May, although it had already played in Indiana a month earlier.

¹⁵⁹ *Ohio State Journal* (17/8/24), 2. *Ohio State Journal* (21/10/24), 8.

¹⁶⁰ M. William Lutholtz, *Grand Dragon: D.C. Stephenson and the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana* (Purdue University Press, 1991), 287-289. Ralph Roudebusch, a poultry farmer and a local stockholder in the company, revealed in court that he had chatted with Stephenson in Columbus, Indiana in January 1925. Roudebusch explained that 'I talked with them about the Moving Picture Company in which Mr. Stephenson was the heaviest stockholder.' Indiana Supreme Court, Stephenson v. Indiana Appellant's Brief Vol. 2. Case 25310. See rec. p. 2218-2219 and 2235-2239.

¹⁶¹ Richard K. Tucker, *The Dragon and the Cross: The Rise and Fall of the Ku Klux Klan in Middle America* (Archon Books, 1991) makes no mention of Cavalier but suggests that Stephenson gained editorial control of *The Fiery Cross* in Indiana in early 1923. Local Klan groups continued to organise screenings of *The Traitor Within* and according to *Indianapolis Weekly Messenger* (17/12/25, p.5), the Klan was intending to show the film in the Marion City Auditorium on New Year's evening.

¹⁶² M. William Lutholtz, *Grand Dragon: D.C. Stephenson and the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana* (Purdue University Press, 1991), 287-289.

¹⁶³ 'K.K.K. Klantaquas in '25', *Variety* 16/7/24), 1, 26. 'No Klantaquas', *Helena Daily Independent* (23/4/25), 4. The article originally appeared in *New York Variety*.

¹⁶⁴ Indianapolis Directory 1924, p. 485. 1925, pp. 813, 892, and 1589. Hoosier was housed at 217 Wimmer Building, surrounded by other film companies like Selznick Distribution Company and the National Film Exchange, A regular advert for 'America's Greatest Klan photoplay' in *The Fiery Cross* stated that 'for particulars write or wire Hoosier Distributors.' The share certificate is listed as No. 1636 and was accessed on 15/5/2006 at http://cigarboxlabels.com/modules/gallery/album17/Cavalier_Motion_Picture_Company_Inc_1924_Delaware.

¹⁶⁵ *Indianapolis Star* (2/7/25), 2. The Marion County Grand Jury, when compiling information regarding David Stephenson, the leading shareholder of Cavalier, mentioned the company in their notes. A note, dated 26 August 1926 explained that Martha Yoh Marson 'was around Stephenson's [sic.] offices all the time. She is now in Florida. She went down there with Edward Young Clarke in connection with the Twentieth Century Motion Picture Corporation.' See Marion County Grand Jury notes, D.C. Stephenson Collection (M264), Box 3, Folder 6, at Indiana Historical Society. The note is dated 26/8/26.

¹⁶⁶ 'Local Men Back Movie Enterprise', *Indianapolis Star* (2/7/25), 1-2. The Twentieth Century Motion Picture Company was a subsidiary of Twentieth Century Enterprises. While Clarke was in charge of the movie company, Stoughton Fletcher was president of the Twentieth Century Land Company. The report claimed that nearly \$100,000 in life memberships was subscribed by Indianapolis businessmen at the meeting at the Indianapolis Athletic Club.

¹⁶⁷ *Indianapolis Star* (2/7/25), 1-2.

¹⁶⁸ 'Erstwhile Klan Chief to be Sentenced', *Hammond Times* (19/7/34), 5.

¹⁶⁹ *Oakland Tribune* (14/2/26). Also *Lincoln Star* (19/1/26), 1, *Nevada State Journal* (6/2/26), 2.

¹⁷⁰ *Imperial Night-Hawk*, (16/5/23, p. 8) The report explained that the Fort Worth Klan No. 101 would use the Fort Worth *Star Telegram* Broadcasting Station in Texas to broadcast a 'Klan radio program.' It revealed that 'some novel stunts and some interesting information about Klan activities will be broadcasted at this time and every Klansman is advised to be on the alert for this message.' 'Klan Program Broadcasted', *The Protestant Home Journal* (15/4/24). 'Forum Broadcasting Station', *Kourier* (2/28), 10-12, outlined the formation of a radio station set up by 'The Fellowship Forum'. The idea first emerged in April 1927 and the article presented the station as a Klan enterprise, 'built by Protestant money'. It appeared in opposition to the 'Romanized press, and some Jewish publications', with these groups described as 'enemies of red-blooded Americanism'. The station again included programs of old hymns sung by choirs, and an old-fashioned gospel sermon.

¹⁷¹ Marion County Grand Jury notes, D.C. Stephenson Collection (M264), Box 3, Folder 6, at Indiana Historical Society. The note is dated 26/8/26.

¹⁷² *Ohio State Journal* (10/12/23), 5:12.

¹⁷³ *Dawn* (9/6/23), 13. 'K.K.K. Indifference', *Variety* (13/8/24), 1.

¹⁷⁴ *Daily Northwestern* (17/7/24), 3.

¹⁷⁵ 'Motion Picture to Show Work of Klan', *Imperial Night-Hawk* (22/8/23), 4.

¹⁷⁶ *Variety* (14/10/21), 47.

¹⁷⁷ Ohio Division of Film Censorship Records held at Ohio Historical Society. *The Mysterious Eyes of the KKK* (certificate no. 2666) was submitted on 26/12/22. *The Traitor Within* (rejected film 116) was rejected on 14/4/24.

¹⁷⁸ 'Letter from Frank B. Coigne to N.Y. State Censor Board' (5/10/23). Report and Correspondence of the Motion Picture Commission of New York for *The Knight of the Eucharist* (Serial 5715- 8/22. File 7915. Box 2689) and *Mask of The Ku Klux Klan* (Serial 49838- 11/23. File 9115. Box 2709). From *New York State Archives, Motion Picture Division*.

¹⁷⁹ Pearl Bowser and Louise Spence, *Writing Himself into History: Oscar Micheaux, His Silent Films, and His Audiences* (Rutgers University Press, 2000), 158. Beneath the poster it said 'See the murderous ride of the insidious Ku Klux Klan.' *The Norfolk Journal and Guide* complained after Micheaux's work was banned from a theatre in Virginia, that 'it is as wholesome an entertainment if not more so than *The Birth of a Nation* or *The Clansman* which have been shown here many times.' See Henry Sampson, *Blacks in Black and White: A Source Book on Black Films* (1995), 159. Micheaux himself complained to the Virginia censor board that 'there has been but one picture that incited the colored people to riot, and that still does, that picture is *The Birth of a Nation*.' Micheaux's troubles with the censors forced him to take many of his films overseas, and although the censors were more concerned with the presentation of race in his work, any representation of the Klan immediately faced close censorial scrutiny after *Birth* and throughout the 1920s. See Charlene Regester, 'Black Films, White Censors' from *Movie Censorship and American Culture* (1996), 176, 179.

¹⁸⁰ *Fiery Cross* (14/12/23). *Kokomo Daily Dispatch* (26/7/23), 1-2. Thomas Cripps (1977), 145, briefly mentions *The Toll of Justice*, suggesting that it directly responded to the rise of African-American productions. 'In the midst of the boom for Negro revues, films and drama the Klan's

own film, *The Toll of Justice*, was bogged down in re-shooting and re-cutting.' The film more clearly responded to the mainstream releases discussed in chapter two and to specific anti-Klan films, but Cripps again presents the Klan directly responding and engaging with existing productions.

¹⁸¹ Steven J. Ross, *Working Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (Princeton University Press, 1998), 35.

¹⁸² Pearl Bowser and Louise Spence, *Writing Himself into History: Oscar Micheaux, His Silent Films, and His Audiences* (Rutgers University Press, 2000), 28.

¹⁸³ *Davenport Democrat and Leader* (9/3/23), 12.

¹⁸⁴ The Catholic Motion Picture Actors Guild formed in 1923 with Thomas Meighan as President, in part to counteract what it perceived as negative representations of its religion within film. Thomas Meighan was a regular attraction at the American Theatre in Noblesville.

¹⁸⁵ *Indiana Catholic* (4/1/24). Adverts appeared regularly for a number of theatres including the Schubert Murat, the Circle, and B.F. Keith. The Klan criticised *Abie's Irish Rose* as a piece of Roman propaganda, suggesting that 'the marriage of a Jew to a Catholic seems to please a certain class of patrons highly.' See *Fiery Cross* (28/3/24, p.6). The Murat also showed *Simon Called Peter* which *The Fiery Cross* proudly reported had a steady drop in attendance after the paper 'awakened' Protestant playgoers to the play's content. See *Fiery Cross* (28/11/24), 7.

¹⁸⁶ The film was regularly presented under the auspices of local Legion groups, but when it was presented at Fairview Park, it was described as 'the American Legion film... shown under the auspices of the Knights of Columbus.' Both the American Legion and the Knights of Columbus looked to exhibit films, and in the example of *The Man Without a Country*, the same film was used to benefit both groups. See *Indiana Catholic* (3/8/23), 8.

¹⁸⁷ 'James Darst of Legion Film Service in City', *Indianapolis Star* (11/8/21), 16. Well Hawks, another 'noted publicity man' who had worked for a number of film companies and who during the War was in charge on publicity for the navy, was also heavily involved in the formation of the service. 'Wells Hawks, "The Booster"', *The Bismarck Tribune* (8/2/22), 7.

¹⁸⁸ 'Film Service Gets Generous Approval', *The Pinedale Roundup* (6/3/24). The article also appeared in *Ruthven Free Press* (27/2/24), 3.

¹⁸⁹ *The Pinedale Roundup* (6/3/24), 6.

¹⁹⁰ A report on the Legion's purchase of the film featured in *Indiana Evening Gazette* (9/1/23). For further Legion screenings of the film, see for example *Kingsport Times* (16/3/23), (20/3/23), *The Indianapolis Star* (11/8/23), 4.

¹⁹¹ *The Lincoln Star* (16/2/23), 6. *The Mansfield News* (15/6/24) includes a lengthy review and large advert for *The Whipping Boss*. *The Davenport Democrat and Reader* (4/5/24, p.19), reports a forthcoming four-day screening at the Garden Theatre. *Edwardsville Intelligencer* (22/3/24, p.1) reports a screening at the Wildey theatre. *The Whipping Boss* was based on the Tabert Case and depicts a young Legionnaire whipped to death in prison. It was produced by Beverly Productions for the Monogram Pictures Corporation, who then negotiated with the Legion for the distribution rights.

¹⁹² 'American Legion to Handle Monogram's "Whipping Boss"', *Moving Picture World* (23/2/24), 636. The deal was described as 'one of the largest deals put over recently in the independent market.' Earle Meyer, the director of the film service, explained that the Legion had 'no intention of going into the general film business. The organization handles only such films as have a special Americanization value or appeal to ex-service men.' He further explained that at present the Legion was distributing three features.

¹⁹³ *Mansfield News* (15/6/24), 4. *Mansfield News* (14/6/24), 8, explains that half of the proceeds will be given to the band.

¹⁹⁴ *Kansas City Star* (18/1/23), 1.

¹⁹⁵ *Bridgeport Telegram* (3/10/24), 5. *Helena Daily Independent* (22/1/25), 3. 'Patriotic Societies Aid in Filming "America"', *Decatur Review* (20/1/24), 20. The article suggests that using the societies helped to make the film 'authentic.'

¹⁹⁶ *Protestant Home Journal* (4/3/25), 1. Advert on p.8. *Fiery Cross* (23/1/25), 7. *Fiery Cross* (30/1/25), 1 and 2.

¹⁹⁷ 'Kligrapp's Komment Kolumn', *Protestant Home Journal* (26/11/24), 5.

Chapter Five:

Klan Decline: The Klan and cinema, 1928-1939

The Klan was at its most active in producing, exploiting and protesting against film between 1923 and 1924, and this period also marked the high watermark for the Klan as an influential force within national discourse. Reporters widely recognised the Klan's successes in the 1924 elections and suggested that on a national level both Republican and Democratic parties had catered for the Klan vote. The introduction of the Johnson-Reed Act in May 1924, which heavily reduced immigration, illustrated that the ideals of the Klan had now become mainstream national policy.

Yet this position was not to last. William D. Jenkins, in his study of the Klan in the Mahoning Valley in Ohio has suggested that by the beginning of 1925, 'the Klan base of support had eroded,' while Kenneth Jackson also reported that 'in the early months of 1926 it was obvious that the strength of the Ku Klux Klan had greatly diminished.'¹ David Chalmers noted that an organisation that had held over three million members a few years earlier, had, 'by 1928, no more than several hundred thousand.' Kathleen Blee further suggested that within two more years these numbers were down to fifty thousand men and women.²

The New York Times in 1926 attributed the 'rapid decline' of the Klan to internal quarrels, disputes over finances and 'accumulated disappointments in the field of politics.'³ These impacted on the popular perception of the group, particularly as reports revealed the murky finances of the Klan. The Klan's legitimacy as a moral, religious reforming force was further undermined by tales of Klan terror and, in particular, of Klan immorality in the press. Most famously, the arrest and subsequent sentencing of the former Grand Dragon of Indiana, David Stephenson in 1925 for the drunken rape and murder of Madge Oberholtzer, invited further revelations and destroyed the Klan's position in the Mid West.⁴ *The Clearfield Progress* in Pennsylvania claimed in 1928 that the 'Klan in Indiana once had 178,000 members: it has now shrunk according to former officers to less than 4,000 paid

memberships.⁵ More recent historians, such as Nancy MacLean, have shown that 'the social conditions that once fuelled Klan growth had largely abated by mid-decade' as post war recession was replaced by renewed growth.⁶

As the Klan declined, attitudes towards the Klan shifted and the Klan's engagement with cinema also changed. In 1924, Klan groups, encouraged by the national Klan press and by travelling lecturers, had protested against films and plays, both directing the criticisms (as, for example, in its attacks of the Paramount sex comedies) and supporting the reforms of existing, respected religious groups. Ten years later in 1934 when reformers campaigned strongly against 'objectionable motion pictures,' it was not the Klan, but its main rivals, the Catholics, that directed and controlled these reforms, establishing the Catholic Legion of Decency as a crucial arbiter of morality. Catholic groups had appeared to usurp the Klan within these film discourses, and were now working with church and educational authorities in leading the 'church boycott of so-called "indecent films".'⁷ We can understand this shift in various ways. On the one hand, the rise of Catholic pressure groups has been linked to shifts in State policy during the Depression years, as the government attempted to integrate Catholic groups within society as a way of staving off perceived unrest amongst working class ethnic groups.⁸ On the other, the decline of the Klan as a national force, alongside the divisions in Protestant reform groups, made the Catholic Legion of Decency the most viable option for the film industry. Richard Maltby suggested that the Legion of Decency appeared as the most credible, organised and unified reform group and certainly the decline of the Klan as a legitimate religious group left a moral vacuum, which was filled by Catholic reformers.⁹

Whilst the policies proposed by the Catholic reformers and the anti-Semitic terminology they used were barely distinguishable from the earlier campaigns of the Klan, the Klan still sought to criticise these reforms.¹⁰ The Klan's criticisms of policies that it had earlier supported may suggest a shift in the Klan's attitude towards film, but the Klan's motivation for these protests mirrored those of its initial criticisms against the industry. The Klan again tried to use these protests to promote and define itself as a Protestant group, to

strike at its religious adversaries, and to present an apparent 'foreign' threat. Gregory Black suggested that the Legion of Decency campaign was destroyed in Jacksonville, Florida, because Klansmen presented these reforms as a 'papal plot to take over the movies.' One Klansman, who addressed a meeting, 'foamed at the mouth' as he spoke at length about the Pope unhatching a new plot to take over the world.¹¹ Frank Walsh told of two ministers who ripped up sermons, which were supportive of the Legion, after a colleague 'who belonged to the Ku Klux Klan denounced the campaign as a Popish propaganda plot.'¹² It was a similar story in Birmingham, Alabama, where 'the dear old Ku Klux spirit cropped up - the ladies were afraid lest they might be playing some deep Catholic game.'¹³ The Klan attacked these regulatory policies because they were presented as Catholic initiatives, and film reform was still a religious issue for the Klan. Yet these attacks were local ones, with limited effect, and by 1934 the Klan was not in a position to influence film reform significantly. The Klan's decline, both as a commercial enterprise and as a legitimate religious organisation, therefore restricted the Klan's engagement with cinema, even though the Klan still sought to promote and define itself through its exchanges with cinema.¹⁴

The 'new Klan'

During the 1920s the Klan had launched protests against on screen film morality, in order to promote and define itself as a necessary educative and religious force. The Klan had also, to a lesser extent, joined in popular criticisms of 'Hollywood,' as a modern representation of excess and immorality. *Movie Weekly* had suggested in 1923 that there might be a 'Ku Klux Klan of the movies,' and during the 1930s there were further reports of mob violence within Hollywood.¹⁵ The most famous example involved the openly gay, former movie star, William Haines. More than a hundred men and women attacked Haines as he was driving in the Manhattan Beach area with his 'companion,' Jimmy Shields. The *Modesto Bee* reported Haines' comments on the attack:

“Some wild untrue rumour must have stirred them up,” said Haines at his antique and interior decorating shop. “It was a lynch mob, all right. It might have been some sort of klan or secret organization.”¹⁶

The attack was subsequently credited to The White Legion, who promised to ‘clean up this town.’ The White Legion was closely linked to the Klan in California, as were other groups operating under the same name across the country. In 1934, newspapers had reported that the ‘Ku Klux Klan, [was] revived in Alabama as “The White Legion” and Glenn Feldman suggested that the group was ‘affiliated with the KKK, and was headed by Klan members.’¹⁷ By the mid 1930s a series of conservative and terrorist groups were emerging throughout America. In many cases, these groups were products of the Depression, as they opposed the state management of political and social life and reacted against New Deal liberalism.¹⁸ These groups were now predominantly anti-Communist, and, as a succession of similar groups emerged throughout the country, the Klan often struggled to differentiate itself from the violent actions of these groups. This was illustrated by the Black Legion’s killing of Charles Poole in Detroit in 1936. Press reports presented the Black Legion as the ‘new Klan,’ while the Klan objected to a line within the Warners’ film which asked ‘are we in for yet another reign of terror from the Ku Klux Klan?’¹⁹

Captain Ramsay, a staunch opponent of the Klan, told Warners during the Black Legion case that he could prove ‘beyond any doubt that the Klan, Black Legion, Black Riders, Night-Riders and Battalion of Death are all one and the same operating throughout the U.S. under the direction and guidance of Dr Hiram Wesley Evans.’²⁰ Although this was never argued in court, by the late 1930s the Klan was bracketed with these other violent vigilante groups. The sensational newspaper reports about these attacks redefined the Klan as a modern, active group, with *Liberty Magazine* running a special edition in 1937 with the heading ‘Is the Ku Klux Klan coming back?’²¹ The revelation in 1937 that the Democrat nomination for the Supreme Court, Hugo Black, was a former Klansman who had used the Klan in the 1920s to further his political ambitions, also aroused interest in the group.

As the activities of the Klan became topical again, Hollywood producers once again looked to exploit the renewed interest in these groups, but by 1936 a vastly different presentation of the Klan now appeared on screen. This thesis has focused predominantly on how the Klan engaged with cinema, but the industry's response to the Klan was closely connected to the Klan's own engagement with cinema. When the Klan was at its most socially active in the 1920s, the industry did not directly respond to the Klan. This, I argued, was largely because of censorship, but also because of the social influence of, and dominant popular attitudes towards, the Klan. By 1936, the Klan was now a marginalised, discredited band that was no longer influential in film discourse. Mainstream producers now presented violent, anti-Klan films, as three films were released in quick succession that responded to the Black Legion's recent murder of Charles Poole. In November 1936, Columbia released *Legion of Terror*. *Black Legion* followed a couple of months later, before *Nation Aflame* appeared on screens in March 1937. All three films confronted modern groups, and the Klan on screen now appeared vastly removed from the idealised presentations of the 1920s. For example, *Nation Aflame* depicted a group of 'Un-American' murdering opportunists that decided to 'capitalise on jealousy, intolerance and patriotism.'²² The villainous mastermind, Sands, sought to establish a secret lodge 'with plenty of mystery, secret meetings, secret oaths, mysterious robes and phoney rituals. Boy the suckers will eat it up.' *Nation Aflame* was written by Thomas Dixon. Dixon, who had earlier helped to popularise the modern Klan through *The Birth of a Nation*, now sought to condemn the motives and validity of that group. The film highlighted the complete shift in both the public and industrial responses towards the Klan.²³

The cycle of Klan films

During the 1920s industrial and perceived commercial restrictions had prevented producers from directly confronting the modern Klan and from presenting a critique of the group. Independent Klan productions and local actualities had promised to show the 'truth'

behind the Klan and to uncover genuine Klan activities, but by 1936 the mainstream industry was positively emphasising that it too could now offer an 'authentic ... behind the scenes drama' of these modern vigilante groups. Reports on *Legion of Terror* asked 'are dramatic pictures competing with newsreels?' while adverts for *Black Legion* highlighted that 'the screen brings America's INVISIBLE TERROR right out into the open!' Film now presented a direct link between the Klan on and off screen. Publicity for *Black Legion* included a large cut-out used within theatre lobbies, which exclaimed 'It really happened,' while further posters displayed the menacing hooded murderer saying 'I may be standing next to you' and 'Beware of these brothers of Butchery.'²⁴ The films of the late 1930s appeared to directly confront the Klan in a serious manner. Publicity for *Legion of Terror* noted that the film was 'daring in its exposé of the racket behind hooded organizations that are infesting sections of America.' Adverts explained that this was the 'first breath-taking exposé of the hooded hoodlums who menace the nation,' and further labelled the film, the 'year's most timely picture!'²⁵

These mainstream productions now offered direct critical attacks on modern Klan groups in a manner that had not previously been possible. When Mark Dintenfass had announced plans to produce a picture based on the *New York World* exposé in 1921, he received little support from exhibitors, while other anti-Klan films, such as the 1922 Catholic production, *The Knight of the Eucharist*, faced heavy censorship. Klan groups had often featured as the playthings of corrupt villains (particularly in westerns), but the Klan was not depicted as an inherently evil and 'Un-American' organisation, as it was in the films of 1936. The Klan, which had often featured as a historicised, brief action sequence within youth orientated films, now appeared as the topical subject within darker adult orientated films. A group, earlier depicted as a moral, law-enforcing band, now appeared as a corrupt, negative racist group. This shift in the industry's response to the Klan can be explained by social changes, but also by the ability of producers to now work around censorship, for example by promoting its films as educative and distinctly American.

Censors were certainly still concerned about any presentation of Klan groups on screen during the 1930s. Anthony Slide reported that the Maryland State Board of Motion Picture Censorship had written to the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America 'to complain about the cycle of films dealing with the Ku Klux Klan organizations' as early as November 1936. Even before *Black Legion* was produced, Warners was aware of the extreme reactions that might be generated by the subject. Morris Ebenstein at Warners admitted that he was unsure 'whether to make a Black Legion picture at all,' and Warners accumulated news press cuttings to see 'to what extent the Black Legion may be considered as being definitely established as a criminal organization.'²⁶ Furthermore, censors still closely monitored the presentation of 'foreign' characters on film. Joseph Breen, the head of the Production Code Administration, only agreed to the premise of *Nation Aflame* on the condition that the victims of the Avenging Angels 'would definitely not be characterized as Jews, Catholics or Negroes.' Breen had also told Warners that an early script of *Black Legion* was 'unacceptable' because it addressed the 'provocative and inflammatory subjects of racial and religious prejudice.' Yet, although censors restricted the presentation of specific foreign targets, producers did present foreign and immigrant groups on screen. Gregory Black explained that in the case of *Black Legion*, 'once the script had been changed to straightforward hatred of foreigners, Breen had issued a seal.' During the 1920s, the removal of racial and religious figures on screen had ensured that the Klan was presented in relation to moral enemies, such as drunks and adulterers. The appearance by 1936 of non-specific 'immigrants' and 'foreigners' certainly helped to distinguish the motives of the Klan from the 'idealised' moral group of the 1920s.²⁷

As I have suggested, by 1936 the Klan was not a particularly influential voice within popular discourse and this made it easier for mainstream films to present critical depictions of the group. Klan audiences and protests were no longer serious considerations, and furthermore, the reputation of these vigilante groups was so greatly undermined that criticisms of the groups no longer called in to question the patriotism of those that produced them. The Klan had traditionally defined itself as '100% American' but the promotional

campaigns for these films now presented these groups as ‘Un-American masked mob gangs.’ The industry now used these criticisms of hooded groups to highlight its own patriotism. Promotional campaigns for *Legion of Terror* included a newspaper contest to find ‘the “real American family” in your town’ and another contest asking readers to name ‘the greatest living American.’ Columbia’s publicity material encouraged exhibitors to ‘blast “America” angle in ballyhoo and publicity’ and suggested arranging special screenings for ‘local American Legionnaires, and other patriotic organizations which stand for American democracy and Liberty.’ The contrast was now presented between the genuine established patriotic organisations, which the producers aligned themselves with, and the discredited Klan-type groups. The changing social attitudes towards the Klan ensured that the industry could present negative depictions of the Klan without a strong conservative response. Yet producers also now worked out ways in which these negative depictions could be screened without facing censorship.²⁸

In chapter three, I considered how the industry’s response to the Klan could be understood by looking at the films generically. The generic shifts by 1936 also help, in part, to explain how mainstream producers were now able to present these modern anti-Klan films. In the 1920s the Klan featured predominantly within westerns or in genres catered towards youthful audiences. However, during the 1930s some studios (most notably Warners) produced social dramas supposedly addressing serious contemporary issues. These were seemingly aimed at adult audiences. *Monthly Film Bulletin*, for example, reported that *Black Legion* was ‘definitely unsuitable for children.’²⁹ The Klan was thus repositioned within these serious, adult dramas, and producers further justified their use of these often-sensational stories, by presenting them as valuable moral lessons. The Klan had repeatedly emphasised the role of films in educating young people, and producers now embraced the discourse and practice about ‘educational’ films in order to attack these vigilante groups. For example, *Black Legion* was used in schools. The Progressive Education Authority in New York published a thirty-five page document summarising the sequences of violence within the film, suggesting questions for discussion, and including

contemporary newspaper headlines related to the Klan. The branding of these films as educative devices helped to justify and legitimise the direct and often violent depictions of the Klan groups.

Although producers emphasised the serious nature and pedagogical function of these films, they still exploited the popular fascination with the Klan and borrowed heavily from sensational newspaper headlines. *Legion of Terror* was 'ripped red-hot from the revelations that shocked all America!' while *Nation Aflame* was 'virtually lifted bodily from the sensational headlines of recent months.' Posters for *Black Legion* also stated that 'the story the nation whispered now thunders from the screen!'³⁰ The representation of the Klan had seemingly shifted, as the Klan now appeared as a violent group, targeting foreigners, but producers continued to exploit the Klan as a source of excitement. *Legion of Terror* advertised itself by exclaiming 'Extra! Hooded Killers exposed!' with reviews noting that the film reached 'an exciting climax with a murderous night ride of the Legion.' Posters for *Nation Aflame* contained pictures of Klansmen (in white) beneath the words 'Sensational! Startling!' The hooded costume again provided mystery and excitement, regardless of the representation of the group. Even within the seemingly serious drama of *Black Legion*, the Klan was still sold as a sensation. In publicity materials for the film, Warners suggested ways to exploit the Klan image, informing exhibitors that 'cut-outs of hooded figures on your marquee can be made doubly effective if lit up at night with flaming torches.'³¹

At screenings of *One Clear Call* in 1922, exhibitors had used local Klansmen to parade outside of the theatre. The stunt generated interest in both the film and the local Klan, and studios suggested similar exploitation practices in 1936. Columbia suggested hiring men, dressed in the black hooded costume of the film to travel through shopping districts shortly before the release of *Legion of Terror*. 'Without benefit of signs on their backs,' Columbia advised, 'have them wander mysteriously around, whispering to passers by: "MEETING TONIGHT RIALTO THEATRE!"'. The films now offered direct attacks on modern Klan groups, but the exploitation still highlighted a commercial fascination in

these costumed figures. Warners also recognised the public excitement generated by the appearance of Klansmen. As one of 'seven selling points for lobby and front' for *Black Legion*, Warners suggested: 'Running Gag on your opening day- have a comedian carried out of the theatre on a stretcher by two hooded figures, and into ambulance. Pull stunt every hour or so.'³²

The Klan redefined

The cycle of Klan films was to be short lived. When *Motion Picture Daily* reviewed *Nation Aflame* in October 1937, it commented on the 'secret society debunking propaganda, the cycle of which by this time has undoubtedly spun its course.'³³ These films responded to controlled fears about new vigilante groups spreading throughout the country, but they also provided fresh publicity for the Klan. The Klan engaged with these critical films, attempting to promote and redefine itself, as I showed in chapter two, by suing Warners over *Black Legion*. Although popular and industrial responses were now largely cemented against modern vigilante groups, the Klan still attempted to engage with film as it had done so successfully before. In particular, Klan groups once more sought to exploit *The Birth of a Nation*, although by 1936 the film appeared in a radically different context.

By the late 1930s the Klan redefined itself as a predominantly anti-communist group, and the Klan both promoted and condemned the communist threat through its debates over *The Birth of a Nation*. Janet Staiger has argued that towards the end of the 1930s, *Birth* was reconfigured by critical 'leftist' and communist publications as a promotion of capitalism. The Klan appeared to embrace this reinterpretation of the film, though from a radically opposed ideological position. Glenn Feldman has observed that the film played regularly in Alabama 'at the height of Birmingham's communist hysteria.' Local Klan groups often supported and aligned themselves with these screenings. For example, in 1936 the local Robert E. Lee Klavern placed adverts for itself alongside posters for *The Birth of a Nation*, employing the same publicity method that William Simmons had

used to launch the Klan in Atlanta twenty-one years earlier. During the 1920s *Birth* had been completely redefined through its close association with the modern Klan, as the Klan had used the film as a recruitment tool, and as a propagandist device, aligning itself with the popular romanticised image presented on screen. Klan groups had used screenings of the film to launch local chapters, to publicise their own role within the local community and also as events through which to define themselves against their religious opponents. By the end of the 1930s the film once again served as a battleground on which the Klan and its opponents confronted one another. Janet Staiger highlighted this, when she reported that early in 1940 the official communist newspaper, 'the Daily Worker and its supporters participated with blacks in picketing theaters reviving *The Birth of a Nation*.'³⁴

The repositioning of *Birth* within a modern social context may have renewed interest in the film, but it also altered the reception of the film once more.³⁵ When the *Portsmouth New Haven Herald* advertised a screening of *Birth* in January 1939, it contained a picture of a Klansman on a horse. Above the picture was the tagline, 'the dreaded Ku Klux Klan rides again!' A few months earlier a piece in *The New Yorker* had discussed a recent screening of *The Birth of a Nation* near Times Square. The article appeared under the heading 'Other Times, Other Morals' and contrasted the recent screening of the film with its initial release. The writer explained that in 1915 'when the Klan rode out to save Lillian Gish the audience stood and cheered. Last week a new generation hissed the Klan and applauded ironically when Miss Gish repressed the foul mulatto.' The comments might be specific to this cosmopolitan northern city, but by the end of the 1930s *Birth* was again associated with active vigilantism.³⁶ Censors also now appeared more sensitive to the concept of vigilante justice within *Birth*. The PCA objected to *Birth* in 1938 and complained that the film 'creates sympathy for those who take the law into their own hands ... and tends to inspire in others a desire for imitation.'³⁷

The Klan 'remade' *Birth* ideologically throughout this period, as propaganda for the modern Klan and as an anti-Communist text. Yet at the same time, the film industry was now also rewriting the history offered within *Birth*. In 1939, David Selznick released his

filmed version of the hugely successful Margaret Mitchell novel, *Gone with the Wind*. Selznick's epic effectively supported and retold Dixon and Griffith's history of the post-War era. Yet, while Griffith had placed the Klan as central to his story of the Reconstruction, Selznick now removed the Klan from this history entirely.³⁸

Gone with the Wind

Margaret Mitchell's novel of *Gone with the Wind* appeared to support the history of Reconstruction presented within *Birth*. Mitchell herself acknowledged the influence of Thomas Dixon on her work in a letter to Dixon in 1936. She wrote that 'I was practically raised on your books, and loved them very much' and recalled putting on plays from Dixon's books, which featured local neighbours dressed as clansmen.³⁹ The influence of Thomas Dixon was also apparent in Mitchell's attitude towards the original Klan, as her novel presented the group as an honourable and necessary feature of the period. In the novel, India Wilkes tells Scarlett that 'of course, Mr. Kennedy is in the Klan, and Ashley too, and all the men we know. They are men aren't they? And white men and southerners.' India further adds that 'you should have been proud of him [Mr. Kennedy] instead of making him sneak out as though it were something shameful.'⁴⁰ When Mitchell subsequently defended her sympathetic presentation of the Klan, she stated that 'I have not written anything on the Klan which is not common knowledge to every Southerner.'⁴¹ This common knowledge was popularised by *The Birth of a Nation*, but by 1939 the legacy of the modern group that the film had helped develop, prevented any sympathetic presentation of the Klan on screen.

David Selznick decided at a very early stage to remove the Klan from the film. At a time in January 1937 when *Black Legion*, *Legion of Terror* and *Nation Aflame* were all playing across the country, Selznick wrote a memo to screenwriter Sydney Howard. In the memo, Selznick outlined his reservations about the Klan scenes:

I personally feel quite strongly that we should cut out the Klan entirely. It would be difficult if not impossible, to clarify for our audiences the difference between the old Klan and the Klan of our times.⁴²

Selznick recognised that depictions of the original Klan were now shaped by the memory of the modern group, explaining that 'a year or so ago I refused to consider remaking *The Birth of a Nation*, largely for this reason.' Selznick did not challenge the romanticised history of the Reconstruction Klan offered within the novel (and in *Birth*), but rather recognised that the modern Klan had reshaped the memory of the original group. He wrote that 'of course we might have shown a couple of Catholic Klansmen, but it would be rather comic to have a Jewish Kleagle.' Selznick did not feel audiences would distinguish the Klan on screen from the vilified modern group and, unlike the producers of the 1920s, he suggested that the Klan could not be separated from issues of race and religion.⁴³

Whilst Selznick cut the Klan out entirely, the group once again attempted to put itself back in, to reinsert itself into film culture. They did so by looking back, one final time, to a strategy first utilised in 1915, when William Simmons had unveiled the modern Klan by burning a fiery cross on Stone Mountain, just outside of Atlanta. The launch of the Klan had effectively coincided with the Atlanta première of *The Birth of a Nation*. In 1939, shortly before *Gone with the Wind* had its world première in Atlanta, representatives of the Klan contacted officials from MGM. The Klan, keen to align itself with the film and looking to generate publicity, offered to burn a fiery cross on top of Stone Mountain to mark the grand opening of the film. The Klan, as it had done throughout the 1920s, still sought to engage with film, but by 1939, it was a largely discredited and marginalised group. The offer from the Klan was thus dismissed, and the story appeared only as a curious anecdote within local papers.⁴⁴

¹ William D. Jenkins, *Steel Valley Klan: The Ku Klux Klan in Ohio's Mahoning Valley* (Kent State University Press, 1990), 152. Kenneth Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 252.

² David Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (Third Edition, New York, 1981), 291. Kathleen Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (University of California Press, 1991), 175.

³ The *New York Times* survey is reported in *Appleton Post-Crescent* (27/2/26), 4. See also Jackson (1967), 252. David Chalmers also suggested that 'the decline of the Klan as a mass movement in America was its own fault, nobody else's'. See David Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (Third Edition, 1981), 299.

⁴ See also Wyn Craig Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America* (Simon and Schuster, 1987), 221. Wade argued that the Klan began and ended with the death of an innocent girl, charting the growth and demise of the Klan from the murder of Mary Phagan in 1915 to that of Madge Oberholtzer in 1925. Wade suggested that the murder undermined the Klan's claims to be a religious group, protecting womanhood and administering prohibition.

⁵ 'Klan Doffs Mask', *Clearfield Progress* (23/2/28), 8.

⁶ Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 184. Robert Goldberg also suggested that 'by the mid - 1920s the dangers had passed or never appeared'. See Robert Goldberg, *Hooded Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado* (University of Illinois Press, 1981), 179. The Klan had been hugely successful in reacting and adapting to different social situations within communities in the early 1920s. Its failure to respond to a changing social situation in the second half of the 1920s must therefore be blamed, at least in part, on Klan leadership and on the crumbling reputation of the group.

⁷ 'Hollywood fights', *Woodland Daily Democrat* (3/7/34), 6. *Woodland Daily Democrat* noted that the reformers included Catholic groups, Protestant churches and Parent-Teacher associations.

⁸ See Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order* (Hill and Wang, 1967).

⁹ Richard Maltby, 'The Production Code and the Hays Office', in *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1939*, by Tino Balio (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993). The continuation of a Klan discourse within film reform would suggest that social attitudes had not been significantly reconfigured within the past decade, yet the Klan had been unable to retain its position within these debates.

¹⁰ The Catholic reformers pledged 'not to attend exhibitions offending morals'. See 'Legion of Decency Fights Naughty Films', *Syracuse Herald* (25/6/34), 9. Joseph Breen, the head of the Production Code Administration was strongly anti-Semitic and blamed the Jewish moguls for the 'decadence on screen'. Breen said in 1932 that the Jews 'are simply a rotten bunch of vile people with no respect for anything beyond the making of money.' His attacks on their role in Hollywood are very similar to those offered by the Klan in *Kourier* in 1933, with Breen complaining that 'Drunkenness and Debauchery are commonplace'. Gregory Black has also suggested that Catholic reformers 'shared a common objective with Protestant film reformer[s]'. Black explained that 'they all wanted entertainment films to emphasize that the church, the government, and the family were the cornerstones of an orderly society; that success and happiness resulted from respecting and working within this system.' See Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics and the Movies* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 39, 70.

¹¹ Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics and the Movies* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 189. During the 1930s the Klan was at its strongest in areas of Florida.

¹² Frank Walsh, *Sin and Censorship: The Catholic Church and the Motion Picture Industry* (Yale University Press, 1996), 113.

¹³ Black (1994), 190. In many respects, part of the Klan's earlier fears about Jewish and Catholic control had now been realised. The persona adopted by the Klan during the 1920s, of the social underdog battling more powerful foreign powers, was also now confirmed, although the Klan was now powerless to influence film reform.

¹⁴ For example, in 1931 the Women of the Ku Klux Klan announced its support of a national plan to regulate the movies. See *Morning Oregonian* (28/3/31). In 1933, *Kourier* published an extreme condemnation of the film industry, which as I discussed in chapter two, condemned the 'Jew controlled moving picture industry' as 'the most putrid and evil smelling business in the United States.' The content of the Klan's complaints remained virtually unchanged from its original protests against *The Pilgrim* ten years earlier. *Kourier* again complained in 1933 that 'one Jewish actor based a whole show on [the] ridicule of the Protestant ministry.' The Klan still used its criticisms of the film industry to define itself in terms of race, religion and national identity against a high profile opponent. See 'Jewish Pictures Threaten Youth', *Kourier* (September 1933), 10.

¹⁵ 'Is there a Ku Klux Klan in the Movies?', *Movie Weekly* (24/3/23), 4-5, 27.

¹⁶ 'White Legion Mob Beats Ex-Film Star, Companion', *Modesto Bee* (3/6/36), 1. The attack is reported in a number of papers including *The Times Recorder* in Zanesville Ohio (3/6/36), 1. Haines had recently been plagued by an unfounded rumour that he had propositioned his neighbour's son.

¹⁷ *Daily Courier* (Pennsylvania), (1/6/34), 13. *The Charleston Gazette* (7/2/34, p.6), described the White Legion as 'rechristened Ku Klux Klan.' Glenn Feldman, *Politics, Society and the Klan in Alabama, 1915-1949* (University of Alabama Press, 1999), 279. Feldman writes at length about the 'lost Klan' between 1930 and 1954, suggesting that the Klan continued throughout this period.

¹⁸ The leader of the Avenging Angels in *Nation Aflame* announces his intention to capitalise on 'the Depression and unemployment conditions'. Workers' disputes are also integral to *Black Legion*.

¹⁹ See 'New Klan terrorizes Mid West', *Indiana Democrat* (Pennsylvania) (24/6/34), 3

²⁰ 'Letter from Captain Ramsay to Warner Bros. Motion Picture Co.', from The Warner Bros. archives at the University of Southern California.

²¹ *Liberty Magazine* (20/11/37). A month later, *Look Magazine* (21/12/37) included a three page article entitled 'The Story of the Ku Klux Klan – Is It Rising to Power Again?'

²² *Nation Aflame* opens with a quote from Lincoln; 'This nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom.' In 1915, the Klan had administered the ideals of Lincoln within the rebirth of the nation, yet by 1937, the Klan was presented in direct opposition to these ideals. A poster for the film urged 'save a nation from shame and slavery' but by 1937, the Klan had assumed the villainous role and was now deemed 'Un-American' and a threat to the nation. See *Hammond Times* (13/3/37), 37.

²³ As I showed in chapter one, Dixon had spoken out against the modern Klan during the 1920s and attempted to produce an anti-Klan film when the Klan was at its peak. Yet although his attitude towards the Klan may not have changed, the popular attitudes to the group had, with the group now widely discredited. This enabled the film industry to now criticise the modern group.

²⁴ *Hammond Times* (13/3/37), 37. The first quote referred to *Nation Aflame*. 'Legion of Terror: Publicity Book'. 'Black Legion: Warner Brothers' Campaign Plan'. Both accessed from *BFI*.

²⁵ "'Legion of Terror" Thrilling Exposes Nation's Newest Menace', *Florence Morning News* (6/12/36), 2. 'Legion of Terror: Publicity Book', accessed at *BFI*. Further posters stated: 'As timely as today's headlines! Dynamited from the sensational revelations that shocked America!'

²⁶ Slide (2004), 175. 'Letter from Ebenstein to Obringer' (13/8/36), from the Warner Bros archives. Warners appeared more concerned about legal action from Black Legion members, and initially was wary because the film 'will unmistakably refer, I believe, to the Black Legion, recently unearthed in Michigan'. The Black Legion group did attempt to respond to Warners and complained about its depiction on screen.

²⁷ Anthony Slide, *American Racist: The Life and Films of Thomas Dixon* (University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 176. Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics and the Movies* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 269.

²⁸ 'Legion of Terror: Publicity Book', accessed at *BFI*. For *Black Legion*, Warners suggested sending out people with sandwich boards saying 'Learn how to protect the American ideals - Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. See *Black Legion*.'

²⁹ 'Black Legion Review', *Monthly Film Bulletin* (31/3/37), 56.

³⁰ *Burlington Daily Times News* (NC) (19/12/36), 3. *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (14/7/37), 6. 'Black Legion: Warner Brothers' Campaign Plan', accessed at *BFI*.

³¹ *Hammond Times* (13/3/37), 37. *Florence Morning News* (6/12/36), 2. 'Black Legion: Warner Brothers' Campaign Plan', accessed at BFI.

³² 'Legion of Terror: Publicity Book', accessed at BFI. 'Black Legion: Warner Brothers' Campaign Plan', available from BFI.

³³ *Motion Picture Daily* (22/10/37), 8.

³⁴ Janet Staiger, 'The Birth of a Nation: Reconsidering its Reception', in *Interpreting Films* (Princeton University Press, 1992), 139-153. Glenn Feldman, *Politics, Society and the Klan in Alabama, 1915-1949* (University of Alabama Press, 1999), 280. During the 1920s, the Klan had presented bans of *Birth* or other Klan productions and stage shows as Jewish or Catholic conspiracies. In 1939, the Klan used the film again to promote itself against a communist threat.

³⁵ A new version of *Birth* had been released nationally in 1930 with a synchronised score. To mark the release, D. W. Griffith had produced a new five-minute prologue, in which he attempted to separate his film from the activities of the modern Klan, by explaining that the Klan had served a purpose during Reconstruction. Griffith and Thomas Dixon repeatedly attempted to position *Birth* within its historical context, while still maintaining its commercial popularity. Yet the public interest in the film was inherently linked to the social relevance and (by extension) controversy surrounding the picture. Reviewers in 1930 now referred to the film as 'the old faithful' and as 'an interesting contrast to modern day talking pictures' without making any reference to the modern Klan. *The New York Times* noted that the audience 'chuckled tolerantly at the quaint sentiment of the opening scenes.' Yet by 1936, the film was again redefined in a modern context. See *New York Times* (23/12/30). *New York Herald Tribune* (19/12/30). See also Anthony Slide, *American Racist: The Life and Films of Thomas Dixon* (University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 196-7.

³⁶ *Portsmouth New Haven Herald* (11/1/39), 6. 'Other Times, Other Morals', reprinted in *Modesto Bee* (2-3/6/38), editorial page.

³⁷ Anthony Slide, *American Racist: The Life and Films of Thomas Dixon* (University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 197. The PCA added that 'the fact that the victims of the Klan's vengeance are members of another race, accentuates the problem.'

³⁸ The 1938 western, *The Texans* addressed the Klan of the Reconstruction era, but the presentation of the Klan on screen was undoubtedly now shaped by the modern group. At the end of the film, Alan, a Southerner who is unable to accept that the War is over, announces his latest plan to his female interest, Ivy. He excitedly reveals that 'We've got a new secret organisation, it's springing up everywhere in the South. It's called the KKK- Ku Klux Klan.' He states that the purpose of the group is 'to drive the Yankees out of the South,' explaining that 'We meet at night and we wear masks.' Ivy's response immediately dismisses the heroic presentation of the group offered within *Birth*, as she exclaims 'How childish! ... This is America. We govern by law not night-riding... You're just a boy playing at soldiers.' *The Texans* offered the same romantic view of Reconstruction shown repeatedly on film (most famously in *Birth*), yet the role of the Klan within this myth had now changed.

³⁹ 'Letter from Margaret Mitchell to Thomas Dixon' (15/8/36). This is discussed in Roy E. Aitken, *The Birth of a Nation Story* (Middleburg, Virginia, 1965), 9. 'The Clansmen were recruited from the small fry of the local neighbourhood', she explained, 'they were dressed in [the] shirts of their fathers with their shirt tails bobbed off.'

⁴⁰ Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (Macmillan, 1936), 798.

⁴¹ Jim Cullen, *The Civil War in Popular Culture: A Reusable Past* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 82.

⁴² Rudy Behlmer ed., *Memo from David O. Selznick* (Viking Press, 1972), 147.

⁴³ Behlmer ed. (1972), 147. In the film, the characters go off instead to a 'political meeting'.

⁴⁴ *Syracuse Herald Journal* (3/1/40), 15. The piece appeared in *Burlington Daily Times* (4/1/40), 4. The article explained that a member of the Klan slipped a note under 'one Metro official's hotel room door' late at night.

Conclusion

I began my introduction with a quote from Walter White, the national secretary of the N.A.A.C.P., in which he suggested that *The Birth of a Nation* exercised a huge influence over the re-emergence of the Klan during the 1920s. My research stemmed from this little acorn, a piece of conventional wisdom that linked the growth and success of one of the most significant social, cultural, and political movements in American history to a single film. Throughout my work, I have explored, not only the validity of these claims but, more importantly, the relationship between the Klan and cinema. History is littered with assumptions, but by questioning a single piece of inferred wisdom, I have been able to uncover a far larger and more revealing history than I ever imagined.

This history stretches far beyond *The Birth of a Nation*, introducing other films that the Klan produced, exploited or protested against. Indeed the broad variety of ways in which the Klan responded to cinema, as well as the large number of examples provided, suggest that cinema was far more important to the Klan during the 1920s than existing histories have suggested. The Klan's use and exploitation of cinema may appear surprising, given the traditional, reactionary ideas associated with the group and indeed the Klan's own criticisms of cinema, yet there are two important points to note here. Firstly, the Klan did not oppose modernity as such, but rather used its criticisms of modern technological and social developments in order to condemn, and define itself against, its racial, religious, and foreign opponents. Secondly, while the Klan positioned itself, particularly through its exchanges with the film industry and its promotion of its own films, as a traditional moral and religious social organisation, it was also an extremely modern group. The Klan's exchanges with cinema reveal an opportunistic group, exploiting the conservative discourses against the film industry; a commercial enterprise, constantly seeking ways to

make money through film; a modern, innovative group, embracing propaganda, new media, and the latest technological advances. All of these aspects highlight the 'modern' within the modern Klan. The modern Klan, from its establishment in 1915 to its disbandment in 1944, engaged with cinema and was both innovative, and influential, in its exploitation of film.

For Klan historians, the Klan-made films offer a rare insight into how this secret society wished to present itself on both a local and national level. Yet, it is not only the film texts that are significant. Whether staging parades outside of screenings of *Birth* or *One Clear Call*, or positioning their own films within local schools and churches, Klan groups promoted and defined themselves within the local community through their exploitation of film. The Klan's national identity was, in part, fostered by these local actions. The Klan's protests against the high-profile film industry were reported in national Klan newspapers and repeated throughout the country, allowing the Klan to define itself as a necessary Protestant, American organisation. The Klan also used other media to extend its message, syndicating radio broadcasts nationally and, through its entertainment bureaus, booking up Klan plays that toured across the country. These plays, along with films produced, or adapted, by the Klan, such as *The Face at Your Window*, established the Klan within the local community while presenting an image of the group that was extended across the country.

While this inter-disciplinary project re-evaluates Klan history, it also re-assesses our understanding of the film industry during the 1910s and 1920s, illustrating the pressures exercised on the industry after the War. The Klan can now be repositioned as a significant conservative force within film discourse, rearticulating debates over film representation, cinema exhibition and Hollywood, in order to condemn its religious opponents. Furthermore, the industry's responses to these criticisms highlight the restrictions enforced on mainstream producers, through censorship and through these conservative pressures, as

they produced pictures that in many respects supported the ideals of the Klan. By looking at the representation of the Klan on screen, I have also highlighted the industry's responses, not only to the topical and controversial subject of the Klan, but also to race and religion on screen. Depictions of the Klan were heavily regulated, yet both the Klan and mainstream producers recognised the commercial appeal of the subject. Once the Klan faded as both a national organisation and, more significantly, a prominent critic of the film industry, vehemently anti-Klan pictures were produced. The terminology within the discourses was now reversed, so that the Klan was deemed 'unpatriotic', and the industry's criticisms of the group were promoted as patriotic American responses to this dangerous social threat. This further suggests that the Klan's active involvement in discourses around cinema greatly impacted upon the representational responses of the industry.

The Klan's own experiences within film production also highlight the difficulties facing independent producers after the War. Steven Ross has argued that before the War, political and religious organisations 'altered visual perceptions of the world not by putting pressure on the studios but by making their own films.'ⁱ The Klan did make its own films, but these did not enjoy widespread distribution, often appearing instead at Klan gatherings or at established Klan theatres. This may suggest that the Klan was less effective in altering 'visual perceptions' than in re-enforcing Klan messages to existing supporters. However, these films were also exhibited in churches and schools, and it is not only the film screenings that are significant, but also the publicity surrounding these events, which served to promote and define local Klan chapters, often as moral, religious, educative groups. The exhibition of these Klan productions also reveals the importance, and practicalities, of non-theatrical exhibition during the silent era. Indeed the Klan's experiences with film often appear remarkably similar to those of other groups, including those ideologically opposed to the Klan, like The Catholic Legion of Decency. The experiences of the Klan thus

highlight some of the tactics employed by reforming groups in their exchanges with film, and also the problems facing all independent producers and exhibitors, as the industry became an increasingly powerful oligopoly.

A close exploration of American social history helps us to understand more about cinema in the 1910s and 1920s, but equally an examination of cinema helps us to re-evaluate an integral part of American social history. For example, in repositioning the Klan within conservative discourses, this project illustrates both the demands placed on the film industry after the War, and the social significance of the Klan, not as an anomaly of the 1920s, but rather as a defining feature of the period. For cinema historians, exploring the Klan's relationship with cinema provides insights into independent film production, non-theatrical exhibition, censorship, and even the western genre. Equally for historians of the Klan, or American social history, an examination of this relationship helps in understanding the growth, success, and decline of the Klan. From the re-emergence of the Klan in 1915 to its demise almost thirty years later, the Klan continually looked to exploit cinema, and used film to define itself, yet the relationship between the Klan and cinema has not previously been examined. By traversing the fields of cinema studies and American studies, this interdisciplinary project attempts to correct this historical oversight and highlight the significance of this relationship in understanding histories of both cinema and the modern Ku Klux Klan.

ⁱ Steven J. Ross, 'The Unknown Hollywood' from *History Today*, Volume 40 (April 1990), 41.

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After Dark aka The Hooded Mob (Jack Noble, 1923)
Alice and the Dog Catcher (M. J. Winkler Prod., 1924)
Alice's Mysterious Mystery (M. J. Winkler Prod., 1926)
Ashes of Vengeance (Norma Talmadge Film Corporation, 1923)
Bella Donna (Famous Players-Lasky, 1923)
Big Stakes (East Coast Films, 1922)
The Birth of a Nation (Epoch, 1915)
Black Legion (Warner, 1937)
Bolshevism on Trial (Mayflower Photoplay Corp., 1919)
The Cambric Mask (Vitagraph Co., 1919)
Cotton and Cattle (Westart Pictures, 1921)

An Eastern Westerner (Rolin Films, 1920)
The Face at your Window (Fox Film Corp., 1920)
The Female (Famous Players- Lasky, 1924)
The Fifth Horseman (E.M. McMahon Prod., 1924)
For The Freedom of the East (Betzwood Film Company, 1918)
Gone with the Wind (Selznick International Pictures, 1939)
Heart O' The Hills (Mary Pickford Co., 1919)
Hell's Hinges (New York Motion Picture Corporation, 1916)
The High Sign (Metro, 1921)
The Hill-Billy (Jack Pickford Prod., 1924)
Inside of the Cup (Cosmopolitan Productions, 1921)
In the Clutches of the Ku Klux Klan (Warner, 1913)
Janice Meredith (Cosmopolitan Pictures, 1924)
Joan the Woman (Cardinal Film Corp., 1916)
Kid Speed (Chadwick Pictures Corp., 1924)
Knight of the Eucharist (Creston Feature Pictures, 1922)
Law and Order (Hal Roach Studios Inc., 1921)
Legion Of Terror (Columbia, 1936)
Lodge Night (Hal Roach Studios Inc., 1923)
Manhandled (Famous Players-Lasky, 1924)
The Man Without a Country (Thanhouser Film Corp., 1917)
The Mask of the Ku Klux Klan (Hopp Hadley, 1923)
The Mating Call (Paramount, 1928)
A Morman Maid (Jesse L. Lasky Feature Play Co., 1917)
The Mysterious Eyes of the Ku Klux Klan aka The Inside Story of the Ku Klux Klan, The White Rider (Bernard McComb, 1922)
Nation Aflame (Treasure, 1937)
Northern Schoolmaster (Kalem Co., 1909)
One Clear Call (First National, 1922)
The Pilgrim (Charles Chaplin Film Co., 1923)
The Prodigal Judge (Vitagraph Co., 1922)
Riders of the Dawn (Zane Grey Pictures inc., 1920)
The Rose of Kentucky (Biograph, 1911)
Shadows of the West (Cinema Craft, 1921)
The Symbol of the Unconquered (Micheaux Film Corp., 1920)
The Texans (Paramount, 1938)
Three Ages (Metro Pictures Corp., 1923)
The Toll of Justice (Miafa Picture Company, 1923)
The Traitor Within (Cavalier Pictures, 1924)
Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson (PBS Paramount, 2004)
When Knighthood Was In Flower (Cosmopolitan Pictures, 1923)
The White Caps (Edison, 1905)
The White Masks (William M. Smith Prod., 1921)
The White Rose (D.W. Griffith Inc., 1923)
The White Sister (Inspiration Pictures, 1923)
Within Our Gates (Micheaux Film Corp., 1920)
Yesterday, Today and Forever (Wheeler Prod., 1921)
Young Sherlocks (Hal Roach Studios Inc., 1922)